



"M. Alphonse butted Raymond with his head in the stomach and sent him rolling; then he kicked him and cuffed him when he was down with true French pluck." Page 18.

LOST IN PARIS,

AND

OTHER TALES.

BY

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LONDON:
HODDER AND STOUGHTON,
27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCLXVIII.

*Butler & Tanner,
The Selwood Printing Works,
Frome, and London.*



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Lost in Paris.

CHAPTER I.

FRENCH was a dead language to Raymond Elliott. By some strange mishap, his education had been conducted on the "good old system," that is to say, Greek and Latin had been crammed into him from infancy, and much lore, which is supposed to be good ballast for the mind ; but modern languages and commonplace philosophy were left for riper years, or to come by intuition. Raymond was anything but a dull boy ; he could see a point as well as most people ; he had a good deal of "gumption," and natural talent ; he was a lively, companionable fellow, and knew a smattering of almost everything—except French ; and at the particular time to which our story refers, a smattering of French would have been more valuable to him than the completest knowledge of Greek, Latin, and classic lore.

That true, blessed time for which every school-boy pants and yearns, and at which parents and guardians groan and tremble—the Midsummer holidays—had commenced, and Mr. Elliott, in self-defence against the importunities of his family, and in

fulfilment of a yearly custom, prepared to "go out of town" with Mrs. Elliott and the family. Ever since last summer it had been decided that he should take his family to "foreign parts," and a visit to Dieppe and Rouen was fixed upon. But Raymond, who was not tied to time, and had no notion of going to France without seeing Paris, was determined, by hook or by crook, to pay a visit to the gay metropolis. Now, as luck would have it, his uncle, Mr. Godfrey, was living in Paris, and Raymond determined to be on the alert to get into his special good graces, and procure an invitation to spend a little time with him. So he cast about in his mind, long before the holidays commenced, how he could best accomplish his wish, and with that shrewdness which is not an uncommon talent among boys, he hit upon a plan. He would write to his uncle, and tell him about his school-life, and speak about the pleasant days they had spent when Mr. Godfrey last visited his parents in England. It was a very good letter, and Raymond did not attempt to disguise from himself that it was written with a purpose; for as he said to Ned Beasley, when he dropped the letter into the post-office, "There goes a sprat to catch a herring." The bait was nibbled; Mr. Godfrey wrote him a very kind letter in reply, encouraged him to persevere in his studies, and hoped to hear from his nephew again. After a lapse of a month or two, Raymond was fortunate enough to secure a handsome prize for a drawing, in which he had displayed a good deal of taste and talent.

"Now," thought he, "I will see if I cannot turn this to some account. Uncle Godfrey is an artist, he will feel pleased

and flattered if I send him a copy of this drawing ; and besides, he is such a nice old gentleman, that without any mean motives I shall really be very glad to let him have it ! ”

So the drawing went, and, at the end of the week, Raymond received a letter in reply, thanking him for the present, and praising his skill very highly. Moreover, the letter contained a “tip,” which to every school-boy is a thing more to be desired than praise. In the letter, this passage occurred—“I wish, my dear lad, you could see the wonderful exhibitions of art in this wonderful city ; I am sure you would be charmed. Mind, if ever you think of coming to Paris, you must be sure and let me know, and I shall have much pleasure in trotting you out to see some of the sights.” What more could be desired ? it only remained now to wait a little longer, and then bring his pet scheme to a climax. The last week before the holidays came, and Raymond once more wrote an affectionate letter to his uncle. He announced the day of breaking-up, and the arrangements which his father had made to go to Dieppe and Rouen ; he deplored greatly that he could not persuade his father to go on to Paris, and feared that the mortification of feeling that he was so near the centre of the world’s glory, and the seat of beauty and poetry and art, and all that sort of thing, and yet unable to visit it, would spoil the charm of the journey.

Raymond’s hair did not stand on end with excitement, nor did all the breath go out of his body when a few days later he found a letter lying on the hall-table for him, bearing the French post-marks. But his hand trembled with eagerness,

and his eyes shot out sparks like electric-machines. "I don't mind forfeiting my new mouse-trap, or my best line, fish-hook, shot and gut and all," said he to Ned Beasley, who was in his confidence, "if this isn't an invitation to Paris!"

"And just to prevent you from being miserable with all your losses," responded Ned, "I don't mind forfeiting two yards of whip-cord, or a pick from my button-bag if it is."

The letter was opened; the thin paper on which it was written quivered like an aspen-leaf in a thunderstorm, and a few minutes later Raymond passed it over to Ned, while he indulged in a few steps of impromptu hornpipe, a few bars of wild whistling, and a "hurrah!" as enthusiastic as if a thousand voices had joined him in chorus. Yes; it was settled; the thin end of the wedge had opened the door, the bait had been swallowed, the invitation had come! Raymond encored his own "hurrah!" and Ned handed over the whip-cord.

Mr. Godfrey had not done the thing by halves; he wrote to Mr. Elliott by the same post, telling him how he had invited Raymond to spend a week or so at Paris, and begging him to give his consent for him to come.

There are not many fathers, probably, who feel it would be a very dreadful hardship to spare one of their sons for a part of the holidays. Parents do not, as a rule, feel so "awfully jolly" about vacations as the youngsters, and as Raymond's brothers and sisters were all younger than he, and easier to be amused; and as Mr. Elliott did not feel it would tear his heart-strings into little bits to part with his son for a week or so,

the invitation was accepted ; and it was arranged that before Mr. Elliott left Rouen he should see Raymond into the train for Paris, and give him full directions to find out his uncle on his arrival.

It is not necessary for us to give a lengthened description of the "family" holiday. It is enough to say, that when Mr. Elliott with his wife and five children left Newhaven, they were in the highest spirits ; as soon as they got out on the "vasty deep" they were all in a state of joyous excitement ; as soon as the vessel took her first roll they all lost their equilibriums ; and as soon as they regained them they sat stone-still, and white as ghosts. The only society they sought for the remainder of the voyage was the company of the steward. At last they arrived at Dieppe ; and when they settled down in their comfortable apartments, and became assured that the rooms were not swinging about, the colour came again to their faces, and they became calm enough to talk about the majesty and grandeur of the sea, which they hadn't seen, and its perils, which they hadn't experienced. A week passed away merrily enough ; there were pleasant excursions to be made, some interesting sights to be seen, and a never-ending source of delight was to watch fish-wives and fishermen at their work. At the end of that time, preparations were being made to continue their journey to Rouen, and all were on the *qui vive*, when, the very day before their proposed departure, a telegram came to Mr. Elliott, telling him that very pressing business demanded his immediate return to England. Here was a pretty kettle of fish ! all the family were in a stew ; and

Raymond boiled over with indignation against business in general. But Mr. Elliott had arrived at that time of life when experience had taught the lesson that it is no use going to war with circumstances ; he could not leave his family in a foreign land ; it was impossible that he could stay there any longer, and so the boxes were packed ; and one night they all sat round the open window, talking about their return journey on the morrow.

• Raymond had “stuck up for his rights,” as he was pleased to call it, and could not be led to see that any business in any part of the globe could have the remotest influence in interfering with his holiday ; and so, with all the eloquence which a boy of fourteen can command when a great interest is at stake, he had pleaded his own cause, and gained his father’s permission to go on to Paris.

“Now, Raymond,” said Mr. Elliott, “I confess I feel somewhat uneasy in trusting you on this journey alone, but I shall have time to see you off by the first train before our boat starts, and then, as you don’t know a word of the language——”

“Except *oui* and *nong !*” interrupted Raymond.

“I shall give you full directions in writing, and you will only have to present the paper to some respectable person, or perhaps a railway official will do, and with a little discretion you will be all right.”

Whereupon, Mr. Elliott got out his writing-desk, and with the assistance of his wife, who was his living dictionary, he carefully composed and elaborately wrote, in the

roundest hand he could adopt, the following sentence in French :—

“Be good enough to tell a coachman to drive me to M. Godfrey’s, 32, Boulevard Poissonnière, Paris. I have a carpet bag and a small portmanteau with me. I do not speak French.”

“There,” said he, when the task was finished, “if you put that in your pocket, and learn it by heart if you can, in the train, and then recite it, or read it, or ask somebody to read it for you, I do not think you can go far astray ; and mind, you must explain to your uncle that I have been suddenly called away, which accounts for your coming to him before the appointed time.”

“And be sure you write as soon as ever you get to your uncle’s,” said Mrs. Elliott, “for we shall be very anxious till we hear from you.”

“And mind,” said Mr. Elliott, “that the very first day you go back to school, you begin to learn French.”

Next morning, everybody was astir by daylight ; but what with attending to this, that, and the other ; finding that some things were not packed up, and that little delays occurred where they were least expected, Mr. Elliott discovered that it would be impossible for him to see Raymond off by the train, and return in time to catch the boat ; and so it was arranged that Raymond should see them off, and the landlady’s husband, who returned from business about five o’clock, would see him off by the evening train.

So matters stood ; Mr. Elliott and his tribe did manage to catch the boat, and Raymond watched them till the handker-

chiefs they waved became mere specks in the distance ; then he strolled about the town to say good-bye to it, and so easily passed the day, that his patience was not taxed, much less exhausted, in waiting for the evening train.

Monsieur Bouvet, the landlady's husband—for it would be altogether a misnomer to call him the landlord—was a bustling little man, with a very round face, very round eyes; and a very round stomach. He looked upon life complacently, and was more than content to allow Madame Bouvet to be by far his better half. In disposition, he was like the tumblers sold by the Italian image venders—knock them down and they come up again, and always with the same smile. If he had one prevailing vanity, it was his knowledge of English ; and the little man capered with pleasure as he conducted Raymond to the station.

"I shall you take to ze engine of steam," said he, in jerks, "and you vill recollect no more Dieppe when you see Paris Oh, eet is beau-ti-ful, it is vonderful, eet is more than I have in Engleesh !"

Raymond replied that Dieppe was a very jolly place, and M. Bouvet was a very jolly fellow, and he hoped the time would come when he should see both again. For which speech, M. Bouvet seemed very much inclined to kiss Raymond, and he seemed very much disinclined to receive any such salute.

The ticket was obtained, the train was ready, the bell was rung, the carriage doors were banged. A whistle and a snort, the train moved on, and M. Bouvet danced farewell on the platform.

At last Raymond was on his way to Paris, and he pictured

to himself streets of gold and palaces of jewels ; he drew up a programme, in his imagination, of no end of sights to see and things to be done ; and he speculated on all the wonderful events before him, and the startling stories he would have to tell Ned Beasley when he got back to school.

There was only one gentleman in the compartment, and as he was a Frenchman, and was diligently reading the paper while the light lasted, Raymond did not attempt any conversation ; and so, when he had indulged in his meditations for an hour, he thought he would get out his written instructions as to the address of his uncle, and begin to study them.

He felt in the breast pocket of his coat, but the letter was not there. Then he tried his waistcoat and trousers pockets, the letter was not there. Then he tried them all over again and again. "What a stupid thing," said he to himself, "not to have taken care to put it in this pocket ; but I recollect, I had my other coat on last night, when papa wrote the instructions, and so I suppose it is there."

As quick as thought he took out his portmanteau, and searched the "other" coat. It was not there ; and when everything he possessed had been carefully searched over and over again, and the missing paper could not be found, he sat down on the seat, with his face red as the setting sun, the perspiration standing on his forehead like silver beads, and his hands nervously clutched together.

The Frenchman, who had watched the proceedings with evident interest throughout, tried all he could do to assist Raymond in his dilemma.

"*Mais, qu'a tu donc, mon ami ?*" said he.

"I am an English boy, sir, going to Paris, and I have lost my instructions ; and I don't know where my uncle lives any more than the man in the moon."

The Frenchman put up his hands, shrugged up his shoulders till they reached his ears, smiled affectionately, and replied :—

"*Je ne comprends pas. Ne parles-tu pas français ?*"

Raymond shook his head, showed his tongue in proof that he was English, and turned his empty pocket inside out. A light dawned on the Frenchman's mind—the lad must have lost his railway-ticket, or his purse. So he took out money from his pocket, and asked Raymond if that was what he wanted, and then his railway-ticket in like manner ; but both of these requirements Raymond possessed, and as it was quite impossible to help or understand the case any better, the Frenchman shrugged his shoulders again, expressed his regret that he did not understand English, and sunk into a dose.

What to do poor Raymond did not know, whether to get out at the next station and go back, or to go on. He decided at last to go on and trust to good fortune and his own pluck to help him.

A mingling crowd was at the Paris terminus, a buzz of voices, a hurrying and scurrying ; and there stood Raymond, stupefied and bewildered, without an idea where to go to, or where to get information and assistance.



CHAPTER II.

RAYMOND Elliott stood on the platform of the Paris station in a state of bewilderment ; he gazed anxiously into the eyes of every passer by, mutely imploring compassion ; but everybody had got luggage, or was helping those who had ; some were rushing about for porters, some for cabs, but nobody took any notice of him as he stood beside a lamp-post with his carpet-bag and small portmanteau by his side. At last a young man bustled past, who betrayed his nation by his bad French. Raymond had found an Englishman.

"Sir," said he, "can you tell me what I am to do ? I've lost my instructions, and I want to and my uncle."

"Do you mean a pawnbroker ?" said the young man, laughing.

"No ; I am not joking, I am really in a great fix. I have come to Paris to see my uncle, Mr. Wyndham Godfrey, and I don't know where he lives. I cannot recollect his old address at which I used to write to him, and his present address I never heard but once. Can you give any information ?"

"What an intense lark ! I would give five pounds down

on the hammer to be in such a fix, for the mere fun of the situation. 'Pon my word, though, I can't help you. I would speak to one of the railway chaps for you, but my French is so remarkably opposed to all the rules of grammar that I daren't attempt it unless I had the evening before me. If I were you, I should give myself in charge of the first policeman I met. Hulloo! my dear fellow, how are you? been looking for you everywhere," and shaking hands with a friend who had come to meet him, the young man walked away, and entirely forgot that Raymond was in existence.

The platform was getting clear of passengers; porters, cabmen, and lookers-on were clustering round Raymond and making his confusion worse confused by their buzz of inquiry, not a syllable of which he could understand. There was an old gentleman in a fever of excitement about luggage which he could not manage to get together, and he was the last passenger left. Whether English or French, Raymond did not know, but he determined to go up to him and see if he could not make himself understood.

"Can you help me in a difficulty, sir? I want to find Mr. Godfrey; he is my uncle, and lives in Paris, but I have lost his address, and—"

"*Je ne parle pas anglais*," said the gentleman, speaking with hands, eyes, and mouth all at once.

"I don't understand that, sir; but surely you can say something to me to help me, for I am in a terrible pickle," and Raymond's eyes glistened with the excitement he was in.

But the old gentleman rattled away, in French, many expressions of regret and commiseration, deplored the fact that he was quite in the dark as to what he was expected to do or say, and kindly offered Raymond a franc, thinking he was in poverty, which, of course, he courteously refused.

A railway official now came up, for he saw there was a dilemma : “ *Eh bien ! monsieur, qu'est-ce que vous cherchez ?* ”

A little crowd of idlers came up to the spot, and a general shrugging of shoulders took place when it was found that the English boy was unable to give any intelligible account of himself or make his wants known. But there was one man in the crowd who watched the proceedings with evident interest, and listened eagerly to every word Raymond had to say. He stepped forward hastily, as if he had but just that moment arrived on the spot, and going up to Raymond, shook him heartily by the hand.

“ I speak only a little English,” he said, “ but are you not the young English gentleman that is related to M. Godfrey ? ”

“ Yes, yes,” said Raymond, his whole face beaming with joy ; “ I am so thankful to have met you : can you take me to him ? Please order a cab, and I will pay you anything you want for your trouble, if you will only be so kind as to take me to M. Godfrey.”

“ Ah, *mon cher ami*, that will I with much pleasure,” said he, in broken English ; “ he is a good, kind man is M. Godfrey, and I will not make a charge ; I will do it for my respect to your relative.” And then turning to the crowd he narrated to them the story he had gathered from Raymond's explanation

when the railway officer first accosted him, and added that he knew M. Godfrey very well, and had been told to keep a look-out at the station for the young gentleman, and so he would take him away in a cab at once.

The idlers were disappointed ; they had expected a scene of some sort, and it turned out to be a very common-place event after all, and they left the spot to find "some new thing" elsewhere.

A cab was called, the packages were put upon it, and the man, very respectfully holding the door, begged Raymond to be seated.

"You will come inside, will you not?" said he. "I should like you to, if you don't mind."

"Master Godfrey is too kind," said the man, but he went in notwithstanding.

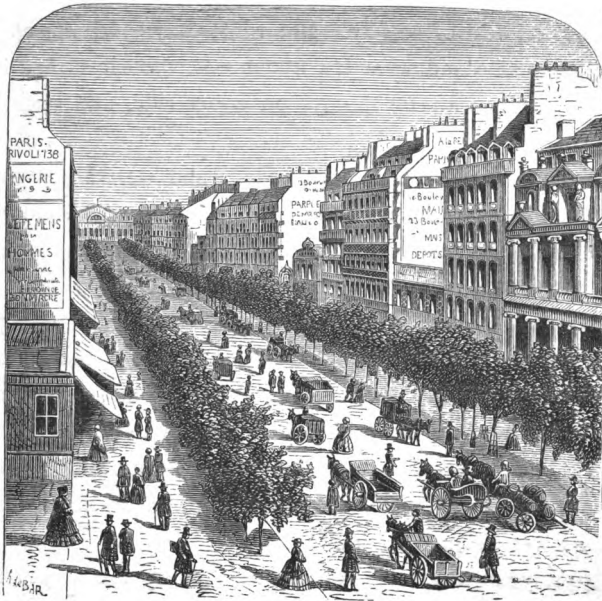
"My name is not Godfrey, but Elliott," said Raymond. "What is your name?"

"I am M. Alphonse ; I am well known in Paris, and I dare say I shall be able to show you some strange sights, which will much surprise you, if you have not been here before."

Raymond said that he was quite a stranger, and should be very glad to have M. Alphonse as his guide, if he could obtain his uncle's permission. He was surprised at the interest his new friend took in all his movements, and was once or twice almost annoyed at the ceaseless questions which were put to him, but he put it down to the natural inquisitiveness of the French character. M. Alphonse seemed very contradictory, too, in some of his statements ; he knew M. Godfrey very well,

he said, and yet he asked Raymond what his profession was, and whether he was rich ; he said that M. Godfrey had instructed him to keep a look-out at the station, and yet he asked whether Raymond was expected ; but perhaps all this was the result of a very imperfect knowledge of English.

The cab continued on its way, passing through crowded streets, blazing with a thousand lights, and Raymond thought



RUE DE STRASBOURG.

he had never seen anything so fine as those long streets, with tall, grand houses, like palaces ; but he was too much excited

with his recent adventures to pay much attention to the sights, and he took the opportunity afforded by the blaze of light to look hard at M. Alphonse, who had described himself at one time as a servant, and at another as a friend of M. Godfrey. His appearance was not prepossessing ; he had very short hair, very little eyes, which seemed to look seven ways at once, a hard, coarse mouth, and a closely shaven face ; his dress was that of a poor man, while his manner was that of one who had seen a great deal of society. But while Raymond was speculating as to who and what his friend was, the cab turned into a dark street, with tall houses on either side, and suddenly stopped.

"Here we are," said M. Alphonse, "and we will get down here, for this is my house, and I shall take you to M. Godfrey by-and-by. Will you be so good as to pay the cabman, as I have but a little money in my pocket."

Raymond handed him some money, the luggage was put down on the door-step of one of the tall houses, the cabman was discharged, and M. Alphonse opened the door with a latch-key in such an expeditious way that Raymond was standing in a long passage, with a flight of steps opposite, lighted with one solitary oil lamp, before he knew where he was, and the door was fastened behind him.

"Now, youngster, carry those packages up the steps, will you? and look sharp about it."

Raymond looked up in surprise. What was the meaning of this sudden change in the conduct of M. Alphonse? But there was no time to debate the question, for he was

again told ; in more emphatic language than before, what to do ; and somewhat terrified and much astonished, he did as he was bidden. The stairs seemed to have no end—round and round, round and round they went ; and at intervals there were numbered doors, and within each door Raymond could hear sounds of voices, or sounds of machinery, or sounds of music. How much farther he was to go, or how much longer he could bear his burden, he did not know : but at last M. Alphonse gave the command, “Stop !”

Raymond set down the luggage at a door, which was soon opened by his guide, and then they entered a dark room. It was a terribly close room, and seemed as if it had not been refreshed with a breath of pure air for weeks. As soon as they had entered, M. Alphonse shut the door and turned the key ; then he struck a lucifer and set light to a lamp, if a wretched wick in a sardine box deserved the name. The light was just sufficient to show Raymond that he was in a miserable chamber, strewed with all sorts of litter. There was one or two portmanteaus, a few boxes, a bedstead with a mattress on it, a chair resting against the wall, because its legs were decayed, a few wine bottles, and a heap of clothes which looked as if they had come from a theatre or *bal costumier*.

“Give me your keys,” said M. Alphonse, as he sat down on the ground when he had lighted his pipe, and drew Raymond’s portmanteau towards him. “Do you hear ?” seeing that he hesitated, “give me your keys.”

Now Raymond was a plucky boy ; he saw at a glance

that he had been gulled by a bad character, and he determined he would do his best to show that he was not to be imposed upon.

"Now ; I shall do nothing of the kind. I want to go to M. Godfrey's, and you must let me go at once."

"I don't know M. Godfrey, and never heard of him till you told me, and if you wait till I take you there you will wait till doomsday. Give me the keys, I say."

But Raymond made a rush to the door, and wrenched at the handle till his face was red and his muscles strained.

"Aha !" laughed M. Alphonse, "it's locked ; don't think you are going to get off like that, because you will find yourself mistaken. Now, if you don't give me the keys, I will take them," and suiting the action to the word he made a lunge at Raymond's waistcoat pocket, but he was too late by a second.

Raymond had had to defend himself from a bully at school, and he knew how to strike out a good clean blow from the shoulder, a trick which the Frenchman had yet to learn. M. Alphonse was on his back, and his head rattled on the floor, and the blood streamed from his nose ; but he did not lie there long, like a flash of fire he was up, and ducking in a cowardly way, he butted Raymond with his head in the stomach and sent him rolling ; then he kicked him and cuffed him when he was down with true French pluck, and poor Raymond was made to feel that the contest was unequal, and he must give it up. The keys were forced from him, and as he sat in the chair trembling with anger and excitement

and fear, he watched M. Alphonse very coolly sorting out the things, casting aside the worthless on to the bundle in the corner of the room, and carefully collecting the valuable into a separate heap.





CHAPTER III.

RAYMOND stood in a corner of the room watching M. Alphonse as he examined the contents of the packages. It was very painful for him to see the little parcels containing presents for his uncle, being set down on the heap, which he felt sure would be taken away, never to be seen again. But the loss of property was a minor consideration compared with loss of liberty, and it might be—what might it be? A cold shudder ran through him as he thought of his position. Here he was at the mercy of a reprobate man; nobody knew of his whereabouts; and if he were to be murdered, perhaps nobody would ever gain a clue to him.

He looked carefully round the room, to see if there was any probable way of escape. There was an old blunderbuss in a corner, but it had a rusty appearance, and seemed rather to be a theatrical sham, than an article for use. The thought crossed his mind whether it would be worth his while to seize it, and make an attack on M. Alphonse as he sat there on the floor, but Raymond was but a boy, and what was his strength compared with that of the man before him? No, there was nothing for it but to patiently wait.

"Now, youngster," said M. Alphonse, when he had finished his inspection of the luggage, "turn out your pockets, and let's see what you have got about you worth having, and let's hope that it is something better than the value of the packets."

"I will not give up all I have," answered Raymond, excitedly. "What shall I do to get back to England? M. Alphonse, you cannot be so cruel as to rob me, and turn me out in this great city, friendless and destitute. If you have a heart, with a spark of feeling left in it ——"

"Come, Monsieur, it's no use for you to try that game ; I don't want argument, I want your valuables ; and if you don't turn them out sharply, I shall have to take them from you. —Come !"

As M. Alphonse said this last word, he brought his hand down on the rickety table with such a smart rap as to convince Raymond that in his case discretion would be the better part of valour, and the wisest thing he could do would be to quietly give in, and hope for deliverance coming in some unforeseen way.

He had about ten pounds in money, and a watch, which his father had given him on his last birthday, and a pocket-book and a knife. He was just about to give up the knife, when a thought struck him that it might be a friend in need, in case of great necessity ; and with as dexterous a hand as possible, he slipped it down the lining of his trousers, as he handed over the pocket-book. The act was not seen by M. Alphonse, and while that gentleman was engaged in

examining the book, Raymond, in pretence of tying his boot-lace, safely deposited the knife in his stocking.

"Now," said M. Alphonse, with a grim smile, when he had satisfied himself that there was nothing more to purloin from his captive, "as I shall have to leave you for a little while, and you may find this room dull, come with me, and I will show you your bedroom, and to-morrow——"

"What on to-morrow?" asked Raymond, eagerly.

"Nothing. Wait till to-morrow comes."

The room into which Raymond was led adjoined the one where he had spent the last perilous half-hour. It was a dirty, wretched room,—a bed was on the floor, and in one corner was an old worm-eaten wardrobe. This was all the furniture the room contained, and seen by the wretched oil-lamp which M. Alphonse held up, it seemed to Raymond worse than a prison cell. It was more than he could bear, and he burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"You are not going to shut me up here? Let me go out into the streets. Take me away, and let me wander about anywhere. I won't bring you into trouble, if you will only let me have my liberty. Tell me what you are going to do with me."

With a muttered oath, M. Alphonse told him to hold his peace, and suddenly turning out of the room, he closed the door after him, and locked it on the outside.

Raymond threw himself down on the wretched bed, and cried for half an hour as if his heart would break. If anything should happen to him, what would become of his

father and mother? What grief he was bringing upon them! what danger threatened himself! And what could he do? Absolutely nothing. Yes, he could do one thing,—he could ask that heavenly Father whose eye is over every land, and whose hand is stretched out to guard every life, to shelter and take care of him; and in the terrible loneliness of his situation, as he knelt down on the floor, he felt God to be a real, living Friend, in a sense he had never known before.

But Raymond remembered the old saying, "God helps those who help themselves," and he felt that if he was to make his escape he must set about it at once. So taking off his boots, that he might make no noise in walking about, he went to the window, and gently undoing the fastening, pushed it open. He looked down into the narrow street; there were some men reeling homewards, singing snatches of songs; in the houses opposite there were one or two lights in the windows, but there were none of the occupants to be seen; the room in which he was confined was four stories from the ground, and there was no possibility of his lowering himself into the street; a sloping roof overhead quite prevented the idea of making an escape by the top of the house. Presently he saw a man walking slowly along, and stopping at the end of the street; Raymond had framed his mouth all ready to cry out to him for help, when it suddenly occurred to him that it was too dark to clearly distinguish who the man was, and although it might be a watchman, still it might be M. Alphonse; and besides, if he were to cry out, he could only express himself in English,

and it was not probable that he would be understood. As he stood at the window, the church clocks chimed the hour, and then twelve o'clock struck. Immediately afterwards, a merry peal of bells rang out their music, and it puzzled Raymond to guess why, until he remembered that in passing through the streets he had seen many of the houses hung with evergreens, and preparations for an illumination, and he supposed that some fête or carnival was at hand, which the bells were announcing.

Turning from the window as a hopeless means of exit, he went to the door; it was locked, and the key was taken away. But the door was not a very strong one, and he felt so strong in his desperation that he had no doubt he could force it open if he were to use all the violence he could. That plan, however, would have availed him little, for he would have been sure to have aroused the other inmates of the house, and insured detection. Then Raymond thought of his knife! yes, it was just the instrument he needed, for it was furnished with a screw-driver, a corkscrew, pincers, and other instruments, and besides all this it had a large, sharp blade. If he could only draw out those screws that held the framework of the lock, and then cut away the lock itself, he could escape from the room, if not from the house. Trembling with excitement and hope, and offering up a prayer for courage and strength and success, he pulled off his jacket, and set to work. In three or four minutes the first screw was out, then another and another, and then the iron plate was in his hand! The big blade was now brought into work;

if he could only cut away about a foot of the panel he would be free! But just as he had commenced, he heard footsteps coming up the stairs, and two or three men whispering together as they came. There was no doubt about it,—the voice that he heard the loudest and most distinctly was that of M. Alphonse. Raymond was in doubt for a moment what to do, but it was only for a moment; he put the knife and iron plate in his pocket, and threw himself on the bed. In another moment he heard a lucifer struck outside the door, the key was inserted in the lock, and the door opened. Raymond never opened his eyes, but pretended to be in a heavy sleep; he felt the men bending over him, and he knew when the lucifer had burnt out, and when the men, muttering to themselves, withdrew. Then when the door was again closed, and the key turned, he started up in an ecstasy of delight to think that he had not proceeded any farther in his work, for had M. Alphonse delayed his visit only half an hour, by that time the lock would have been off the door, and Raymond would have been detected.

The men went in the adjoining room, but evidently not to sleep, for Raymond could hear their laughing and talking, and wrangling and quarrelling; and it seemed to him, by the frequent clink of glasses, that they must be drinking deeply. It was some time before he could muster up courage to recommence his work, but at last he cautiously began to cut away little pieces at a time, and then, as the noise in the next room increased, to work more rapidly and with less restraint until in about an hour's time the lock was in his

hand, and the door was open! Surely the heavenly Friend had helped and sustained him, and he felt that he dared not go out to the unknown perils which lay before him without thanking God for his present deliverance, and asking His aid in all that was yet to happen. So he knelt down again in the place where he had knelt before, but with very different feelings; and then when his heart had been refreshed by prayer, he felt he was not alone, but still under the eye of Him "who neither slumbers nor sleeps;" so he put on his jacket, took his boots in his hand, and quietly, cautiously, and tremblingly descended the steps. There was no one to interrupt him, and when he got to the street door he found that the latch yielded to him easily and noiselessly. Shutting the door gently behind him, Raymond wandered out in the dead of night,—alone.





CHAPTER IV.

AT the best of times there is something alarming to a boy to be out after midnight alone ; but alone in a foreign land, without any definite place to go to, escaping from a den of robbers, perhaps escaping for one's very life ! The position was full of terrible excitement, and if Raymond had not been blessed with a good stout heart and a strong will he would have given up in despair. His first thought on emerging from the house was to look round for some distinguishing sign, so that he might avoid the locality and not put himself again in the way of M. Alphonse. A street or two brought him in front of Notre Dame ; he had so often seen the pictures of that fine old cathedral that he did not require to be told its name, any more than you would if you came suddenly upon St. Paul's for the first time. He only paused a moment to make himself sure of his whereabouts, and then, starting off in an opposite direction, he walked at a good smart rate, cautiously avoiding any street where there was a passer-by. It was not till he had been out of doors for about half an hour that he became aware of the fact that he had no hat on his head ;

it had been left in the room where M. Alphonse was making merry with his companions. This was a great trouble to Raymond, for suppose a watchman or a policeman should meet him, he would be sure to be stopped, and he dreaded the thought of getting into fresh difficulties and excitement that night. He walked on, however, till at last he came to another place familiar to him from pictures; it was the Arc de Triomphe; and as he passed hurriedly by the open space around it for fear of being seen, the faint morning light showed him the Bois de Boulogne with its long row of trees. It was just the place he wanted to find, and walking on till he came to a narrow passage leading into a field, he pushed a gateway open and found himself in a paddock with a part of a rick in it. A dry, grassy ditch, with trees growing on the bank, ran immediately at the back of the rick; and thankful to find such a resting-place, he curled himself round, and worn out with fatigue and anxiety soon fell asleep.

A band of music and a loud clatter of voices awoke Raymond. He started up surprised to find that the sun was high in the heavens, and confused with the sound of the music and the distant ringing of bells. He felt for his watch to tell him the time, and then the recollection of how it had gone, and how he had spent the night, suddenly flashed upon him. The sound of the music drew nearer, but before going to ascertain what it was, he ran to a trough, near the rick, which was put for the horses, and bathing his face and hands, and making an impromptu towel of his pocket-handkerchief, he then found his way to the passage he had entered the night before. A

strange sight was before him : a fanciful car drawn by four horses held the musicians, who were dressed in most curious costumes ; a procession followed, of a crowd of people robed in all the quaint and absurd dresses of clowns, mummers, cavaliers, flower-girls, and a host of other characters. Raymond's first thought was that some large theatrical company was parading the streets as an advertisement ; but then he recollected the decorations in the city, and was convinced that the *fête* or carnival had commenced. It did not take long for Raymond to decide what he would do ; in his present hatless condition he would be sure to attract attention if he walked alone, but mingling in that crowd, he could go where he liked unobserved, however curious his appearance might be, for there were hundreds more conspicuous than himself, and when he saw an opportunity of putting himself quietly in the hands of the police, or finding out some English person to whom he might tell his troubles, he would do so. The procession continued its way until it reached the Arc de Triomphe, and then it came to a standstill. All Paris seemed out of doors, and yet every window in every house was crowded with spectators. The motley crowd of mummers, the din of music, the bewildering sight of the masses of people, and the jargon of strange voices, kept Raymond in such a state of confusion and excitement that he almost forgot his helpless condition, and that he had not had anything to eat for nearly twenty-four hours. But he was soon recalled to himself, for as he stood gazing at a party of dancers who were going through some strange and fantastic actions, he saw M. Alphonse !

It was but a glance, but the glance was mutual. M. Alphonse had caught Raymond's eye, and was moving towards the place where he stood. With a cry of horror and alarm, Raymond took to his heels. It would be no use his telling his tale in that crowd, where he might be imposed on again as he had been at the railway station. He had but one definite thought, however, and that was to get out of the way of his cruel pursuer as fast as ever his legs would carry him. It was no easy work running through that crowd, but Raymond was deaf to the abuse that a finely-dressed "character" gave him for tearing her long train as he passed, and dumb to the blow which a cavalier dealt him for running over his sword, which was dangling on the ground. Away he ran, till at last he stood in the open space of the Place de la Concorde; for a moment he halted, and glanced back; it was but for a moment, for he saw that M. Alphonse had gained on him and was only twenty or thirty paces in the rear. He cried a sharp, painful cry, and again darted forward; but he had not gone ten strides before he came to a dead halt, for a voice from a carriage called out "Raymond! Raymond!" If it had been an angel from heaven, the voice could not have sounded more musically to Raymond's ears; but he knew the voice at once,—it was his uncle's.

"My dear boy!" said Mr. Godfrey.

"Stop thief! stop thief! I'm robbed of all I have, uncle! Stop thief!" cried Raymond, rushing off, and while Mr. Godfrey alighted from the carriage, he was in pursuit of M. Alphonse, who at that instant dashed past.

A glance at his nephew's plight and frightened countenance, at once showed Mr. Godfrey that something had gone wrong, and shouting out "Stop thief!" in French, a crowd of people joined Raymond in the pursuit. It was not a long chase; M. Alphonse was already nearly winded when he first came up to his victim; he was not prepared for the sudden flight he would have to make, and running madly off, as he saw the danger into which he had so nearly brought himself, he was in the act of crossing the road when a vehicle passed at the instant, and he was knocked down by the horses. Before he had time to extricate himself from his dilemma, the shout of "Stop thief!" was heard, and Raymond, panting and gasping for breath, and followed by a host of people, came up to the spot. Strange to say, a policeman was there, and with wonderful dexterity he had secured M. Alphonse, just as Mr. Godfrey rejoined his nephew.

"What is the offence?" said the policeman to Mr. Godfrey.

"I can't tell exactly; this lad, my nephew, will tell you. But let us get out of the crowd; get into my carriage, and drive away to the station-house."

Amid a great deal of cheering and chaffing, M. Alphonse and the policeman entered the open carriage, followed by Raymond and Mr. Godfrey.

"Now, my dear boy," said Mr. Godfrey, as they began to move off as well as the crowd would let them, let me hear all about this. How, on earth—"

But the fatigue and heat and excitement, to say nothing of

the want of food, had been too much for Raymond, and he had fallen back into the carriage, fainting.

Fortunately the station was not far off, and as the carriage could now go along pretty swiftly, it was not many minutes before Raymond was lying on a sofa with all sorts of restoratives around him, and kind friends to apply them, while M. Alphonse, with handcuffs on, was locked up in a cell.

When Raymond was sufficiently recovered to know where he was, and to understand all the strange things that had happened, he begged his uncle to let him have something to eat without a moment's delay, for he said he was half-starving. Impatient as Mr. Godfrey was to hear his story, he gladly acceded to the request, and a substantial meal was set before Raymond, to which he did ample justice. Then, very briefly, but very clearly, he told the story of his adventures, only interrupted now and again by Mr. Godfrey, who was so excited and interested in the narrative that he could not help breaking in with "Bravo!" "You plucky young Englishman!" "Well done, Raymond!" and other words of approval, varied with occasional shakings of the hand or pattings on the back.

The matter was fully explained to the police. The charge was duly recorded in the books, and the gentleman who entered the case, said :—

"It will go hard with M. Alphonse this time, for it is not the first occasion of his coming under the notice of the judge."

"And now," said Mr. Godfrey, as they drove away to his house, "we will buy a hat, then put you to bed for a while,

then give you something more to eat, and then we will go out and see all the wonders of Paris, and the *fête* in particular. And Raymond, my boy," he continued, waxing eloquent, "if you shall not enjoy yourself, and see everything, and go everywhere, my name is not Godfrey; and if you ask me why I intend to put myself out of the way to trot you about, I say, because I have got the noblest, pluckiest, manliest young Briton for my nephew that ever put foot into Paris. But, Raymond," he continued, laughing, "let me advise you, before you go out, that you write the address, '32, Boulevard Poissonnière, Paris,' in at least twenty parts of your costume, in case you should get astray again."

"I'll take good care of that, uncle; and to-morrow I'll begin to learn French, and I won't leave off till I can talk like a native."

M. Alphonse was sentenced to five years' penal servitude with hard labour. Paris exceeded all Raymond's expectations. He became quite a hero among Mr. Godfrey's friends, and when he went back to England, he was stocked with anecdote enough to have made any boy's reputation. And Ned Beasley was heard to declare that he didn't believe there was another boy in the school, himself included, who would have shown such presence of mind, and have got out of such scrapes, in such a first-rate way, as his friend Raymond.





Poor Mrs. Vic.

"**D**OGS and horses," said Mr. Penham, to his children one night as they sat round the fire, "have always been my delight. I believe that they've got more common sense and are better-hearted creatures than many men and women. I've seen some strange things in my time with them, too."

"Well, then, father, let us hear some rattling good stories about your adventures," said Alfred, a regular chip of the old block. "Go on, please. 'Once upon a time, when I was a young man.' I'm certain that's the beginning."

"I'll tell you a story about my dog—poor old Vic; she's been dead and buried years and years ago, before some of you were born. She was the most intelligent thing that ever went on four legs. She used to talk to me for hours together——"

"Did you say *talk*, father?" asked Frank, with a merry twitch about the mouth as he thought he had caught his worthy parent tripping.

"Yes, talk, boy. There are lots of ways of talking without words. I can give you my meaning with my eyes, or tell you what I think by compressing my lips, or knitting my brows,

or nodding my head, and so could Vic. I used to drive about the country a good deal, and Vic used to run by the side of the chaise, and as it was dull work all alone, I used to say to her, 'Chilly evening, Vic?' and she would shrug her shoulders; or 'Look ahead, Vic, somebody's coming,' and she would run ahead until she caught a sight or a sound, and then give one short yelp, as much as to say, 'Right you are.' And when I would say 'Well, Vic, ain't you tired, old gal?' she would make a jump clean from the road into her seat at my feet. Then we used to talk about a good many things together, and Vic would whine if I said, 'Hard times, old lady,' or bark a merry bark if I said 'We've had a good stroke of business, to-day, Mrs. V.' She used to go with me wherever I went, and at night her bed was always made up just outside my door; and when the servants went down in the morning, she would scratch at the door to wake me, and sit with the utmost enjoyment to watch me shave."

"And did Mrs. Vic ever distinguish herself by performing some wonderful tricks?" asked Alfred.

"Not tricks like holding pipes in her mouth, or standing on her hind legs when nature had blessed her with four. No; Vic was of far too noble a nature to be a mountebank; I believe she'd have blushed up to her eyebrows, if she could, if I had only suggested that she should make herself ridiculous in that way. But Vic distinguished herself in a much more wonderful manner. One day——"

"Now it's coming," said Frank, poking Alfred in the ribs. "I thought we should come to a regular at last."

"One day I was sitting at breakfast, and your mamma was opposite to me, and we heard a sudden rush along the garden, and there was Vic tearing towards the open doors as if she were possessed, and in she bounded, and seized hold of my trousers. 'You silly old thing,' I said, 'what has put you in such good spirits?' 'Why, this glorious summer morning,' said your mamma, as I stooped to disengage the dog from my trousers. But Vic snarled and growled at me when I touched her, and set up such a yelping that the room rang again. 'Vic's going mad, I'm sure she is,' said your mamma, getting frightened. 'Nonsense,' I said, 'the old lady's got far too much common sense for that.' But as I spoke, away rushed Vic, helter-skelter down the garden, and back again, with her tongue out and her eyes like firebrands. 'There's something the matter,' I said, getting anxious all of a sudden. 'Where are the children?' 'In the nursery, I expect,' said your mamma, ringing the bell. But the servant who answered it said, 'No, ma'am, they went out in the field as soon as they had done breakfast.' And you know there was a stream ran through the field at the bottom of the garden, at the old house; and my heart came into my mouth, as they say, for I thought something had happened to them there. When I rose to follow Vic, she fairly shouted with joy,—it wasn't barking,—and wagged her tail to such a degree that it seemed wonderful she didn't twist it into a knot, or else wag it off. Away she ran, and I followed, and we came to the river. There—I shall never forget the scene. Your brother and sister, Sam and Ellen, little dots of children then, were standing on the bank

of the stream, clasping each other's hands, transfixed and paralysed with fear ; and on a little gravel bank in the middle of the stream, lay your brother George. I thought the poor child was dead, and I jumped in, followed by Vic, and in less than five minutes I had wrapped him round with my coat, taken him in my arms, and had run back to the breakfast-room. And there we rubbed him, and gave him restoratives, and soon he 'came to' all right. And when Sam and Ellen came in, they told us that they had been playing at floating paper boats down the stream (contrary to the rule, by the bye, as the servant was not with them), and George had overbalanced himself, and fallen into the stream. As it was carrying him down, Mrs. Vic, who was in the field, came rushing up, dashed into the stream and caught George by the hair, just in time to swing him round, so that the stream carried him on to the gravel bank.— There, boys, what do you think of that ?”

“Good old Vic !” said Alfred and Frank, in a breath.

“And that wasn't all,” continued Mr. Penham ; “that affair so upset poor old Vic's nerves, that she was always frightened of the water ; and if ever she saw the children there, too near the edge, she would pretend to fly at them, and so keep them off. And Vic often used to remind me about poor George, and tell me to be thankful.”

Alfred gave Frank another poke in the ribs here, as much as to say ‘He's going it !’

“And this is how she did it. She would lick George's hand and frolic about by him, and then come and jump up into my lap, and look into my face as much as to say,

'There, Penham, there's George alive and well. Thank God for it.'

"There, boys, that's my story. Poor Mrs. Vic didn't live many years after, and when she died I was as much grieved as if I had lost one of my best friends."

"Tell us how she died, father, and then we won't bother you for any more stories to-night."

"Well, family troubles, and a too active brain, and one thing and another, told upon her. And she was of a good old age, and had lost one eye. One day, when she was running along, with her blind side to the chaise, she got under the wheel, and was sadly hurt. She took to her bed from that time, and in a day or two she died. I went to see her one night, and said, 'Well, Mrs. V., how's the poor leg?' and she whined a good bit, and began licking my hand and whining more than ever. So I brought her into the parlour and let her sit in my lap, and she dozed a little; but by-and-by she whined again, and licked my hand over and over; and then just as I thought she was going to try and raise herself to lick my chin, she dropped back and died. Poor Mrs. Vic! I never loved a dumb creature so much as I did her."





An Adventure on the Diggings.



STRANGE, wild, roving life is that of a gold-digger. One week in luck, turning up the bright, shiny nuggets—one week collecting stones and dirt, minus a speck of the precious metal ; sometimes settled in a tent ; sometimes wandering over the country, searching for a likely spot to work at. When the sun shines, and the birds sing, and the “take” of gold is good, and your companions are all full of fun and spirit, the day rolls by as merrily as can be ; but when the ground is wet, the mines flooded with water, the tent soaked through and through ; when fires won't burn, and work can't be done—then the day drags along as wretchedly as can be. For a lover of adventure—to whom the rough and the smooth are alike welcome, who takes delight in danger, and who carries the adventurer's talisman, which takes him into scrapes, but always brings him safely out again—there is no place like the diggings. Working in roaring rapids, climbing the slippery rocks, descending the dangerous shafts, and sleeping at night in a tent, with his gold under his pillow of fern, and his pistols by his side ; hunting the wild animals for food, and cooking

them by the large bush fires ; exploring desolate places where human foot has "ne'er or rarely been," and every day meeting with the strange incidents which always connect themselves with such a strange life,—the gold-digger is, or ought to be, a man of mettle.

I shall never forget the night when I and my three companions first saw the gold-diggings. We had walked between twenty and thirty miles from the spot where the cockle-shell little schooner which had borne us a three days' journey across the sea, landed us, and we were jaded and tired. The heavy "swags" (as diggers call them) on our backs had nearly bent us double ; and our feet, from walking over loose stones for one mile, swampy bogs for the next, steep, rocky hills for the next, and all without track or waymark, were so blistered and sore, that we were obliged to sit down and rest. The sun was fast sinking, and we were as ignorant whether we were anywhere near the gold fields as the man in the moon. But as the sun sunk, the breeze rose, and it bore up to us a strange medley of sounds : the rattling of stones, the roaring of water, the hum of voices, the baying of dogs. Hurrah ! we were within sound of the diggings ! There is a malady known by diggers as the gold fever. It is very contagious, and it is said that a novice never hears the rattle of stones in a large tom or cradle—*i.e.* the instrument in which the earth containing the gold is washed—without catching it. A moment after those sounds were borne to us upon the breeze, we were all attacked with the gold fever. And this is how the symptoms displayed themselves. Our

dull faces all brightened up with broad smiles ; we started to our feet, and forgot that they were blistered and sore ; we swung our baggage over our backs, and shouldered our picks and shovels as if they were blades of straw ; and, with one accord, whistling merry songs, or cracking lively jokes, we bent our way up the steep ascent, which, ten minutes before, we felt, though we were ashamed to say it in so many words, we could not have accomplished for love or money. And when at last we gained the height, a sight burst upon us which accelerated the fever to a very great extent. There, down in the valley, was a canvas town ; innumerable tents peeping out between trees and among stunted shrubs, some perched on hill-slopes, some close on the edge of the river, some down in excavations where works were going on. Before most of the huts were roaring big fires, with the logs piled high up one above the other ; over them swung large pots, suggestive of an evening meal ; and beside them were hungry diggers, taking occasional peeps, and wondering why the watched pot never boils ; shaggy dogs lay comfortably before the tent doors, watching proceedings with quiet satisfaction. On the banks of the river, hundreds of men were at work, stooping down on hands and knees, with their large tin-dishes, washing out the residue from their "toms" or "cradles," in which the whole take of gold for the day is deposited, and expectant groups were standing round in attitudes of speculation. Amid the confused sounds which came from that motley multitude was the banging of guns from the dense bush, the cry of the dogs "giving tongue,"

or the scream of birds as they tasted stray shot and gunpowder, telling that many were in search of food for the evening repast.

Like wild goats, rather than weary men, we ran and slid and tumbled down the steep incline which led to the valley; and no sooner were we spied by some of the dwellers in tents, than a shout of welcome, recognition, or freemasonry, was raised, and passed from group to group. This we found to be one of the manners and customs of gold-diggers.

Before nightfall, we had pitched our tent in a snug situation, and were sitting before a blazing, crackling fire, around which a hundred or more men were gathered. Some were singing, many smoking, some spinning yarns, others patching up torn garments; some playing concertinas or bones, and all wearing the happy look which diggers wear when they are doing well. We soon found that every "claim" worth having in the valley was occupied, and that if we wanted to make a golden harvest, we must journey elsewhere.

That night, as I slept on a bed of fern, the gold fever developed itself wonderfully. I had got nuggets as big as Goliath's clenched fists, hidden in all corners of my tents; I was monarch of a mine richer than anything Sinbad the Sailor ever heard or dreamt of; and, oh, how I trembled lest other diggers should hear of my success, and come and rob me of my gold! how I tugged and tugged at a great big nugget, which was too heavy for me to carry, and which would betray my secret if I asked anybody to help me move it! Such an anxious night was it, that I was not sorry to wake up in the morning and find myself a poor digger, with only one little bit

of gold in my pocket, and that bearing the portrait of her Majesty the Queen.

After we had dressed and washed in the river, and toasted our slices of bacon on long sticks, like fishing-rods, before the scorching fire, we came to this decision: one of our party was to stay in the tent, and learn the news, and guard our packages, and I and the other two who formed the party, were to go out and explore the country, to see if we could find a likely spot to work. Full of spirit and pluck, we started off, and through the bush we beat our way, slashing down obstructions with our tomahawks, and doing all sorts of marvellous feats of strength and agility. In three or four hours we had left the valley far behind, and were in a new sort of country; but it bore just the same appearances as the part where the diggers were successfully working; and when we saw some "signs," such as good quartz, black sand, dry river-beds formed by mountain streams, and so on, we set to work, dug deep, and brought up a panful of earth to wash, What was our joy to find as the residue of a tin dish of earth, six specks of gold! Our fortunes were made, we thought, and full of glee and expectation, we dug, and picked, and washed, until we had found two or three penny-weights of gold. But "the shades of night were falling fast," and we had got three or four hours' walk to our tent, added to which we had eaten all our small stock of provisions, and were feeling very hungry. When we turned to find our way back, we were far from sure about which was the right direction to take; and as a matter of course, we all three

decided that three different directions were right. Finally, we agreed to try one route, and started off towards Canvas Town. But, by the time we came to the river, which we knew if we followed, would bring us to the valley where our tent was pitched, we were so hungry and tired, that, by way of diversion, we did what boys often do in the same circumstances,—we quarrelled. One said the other side of the river was easier walking, and two blamed the one who took the lead and led them through certainly very rough country. So, with a spirit of independence which we thought was the right and proper thing for diggers to show, one of the trio crossed the river to try his luck on that side; I struck out a track for myself in the bush, and our other mate jogged on in his old route, taking the lead; and so we proceeded for about an hour, when I heard a cry, “Holloa! Hi! Help! Help!”

I at once recognised the voice of my companion, the ex-leader, and turning towards the spot from whence the sound came, I fought my way through the tangled brushwood. “Coo-ee!” (a native signal) cried I, and a faint “Coo-ee!” came back in return, but whether from the bowels of the earth, the depths of the river, or the clouds, I couldn’t make out. Still I kept up the cry, and still I got a response, and every moment brought me nearer my mate.

“I’m buried alive!” cried the voice.

“Serve you right, too,” I felt inclined to say; but I altered my mind, and answered, “Where?”

“Here!”

"And sure enough, within twenty yards of me, there was a hole ; I crept gently up to it, put my head over the top, and sang down, "Are you there, Bob ?"

"I believe you, my boy ! twenty or thirty feet down, too, and up to my waist in water ; can't you lend us a hand ?"

"Yes ; I'll lend you a hand, if you can reach it. Are you hurt ?"

"Bumped, bruised, scratched, and half-drowned ! but I came on my legs like a cat. How am I to be got out !"

I could not tell ; it was evident enough that he had fallen into a pit which some gold-diggers had made in a prospecting journey ; but how deep it really was, it was too dark to see. However, he had got a lucifer in his pocket, and I recommended him to light it, so that I might have a look at him. It was a queer illumination in a queer place, and I could not help laughing a loud "ha ! ha !" as I saw my friend a prisoner at the bottom of the pit, more than knee-deep in water, as miserable looking an object as could be well seen.

I cast about in my mind for some means of getting him out ; but no means were at hand. I wasted an hour in cutting a long bough from a tree, and trying to fish him up by means of my pick fastened to the end of it ; but we both exhausted ourselves in vain, and ended by getting him up part of the way, when the tackle which bound the pick gave way, and he and it went splash together into the water !

"It's no use," said I, "you must wait till I can get back to Canvas Town, and bring assistance. I can see the reflection of the fires, and it can't be more than an hour's journey. Keep

up your pluck, old fellow, and make yourself as comfortable as you can till I come back."

It was now pitch dark—the moon ought to have been out, but it wasn't—and I had to go very gently in that trackless bush. At length I came to an open place, and so, glad to be able to push on a little, I put my right foot foremost to trudge out briskly, when—"Oh! Help! Hi! Holloa!"



But it was my voice that time; I had tumbled down a pit! Yes, there I was, bruised, bumped, scratched, stunned, twenty feet under ground, and my two feet in water.

"It was in vain to cry "Coo-ee!" or "Hi! Holloa!" there

was no living creature about, and no Ishmaelites likely to come past to take me out of the pit. The stars above were gently shining, because they'd nothing else to do, and I stood there gazing at them for the selfsame reason. But it was no joking matter ; I might die of starvation, or if I did not die, I might have rheumatism all my life. I would have given all the gold I amassed in my dream—if it had been a reality—for a good hunch of bread and cheese. The weary hours rolled heavily away—such hours, I hope, I may never spend again.

It was not till the sun had mounted a good height in the sky, that I saw the faces of the mate I had left in the tent, and the mate who had crossed to the other side of the river, looking over the top of the pit's mouth. If they had been bright, shining angels, they could not have looked more beautiful to my eyes. Gladly I seized the rope they threw to me, and weak though I was, clutched at it with an energy which surprised myself ; and when I had shaken hands, and thanked them, and sat down for a minute or two to recover myself, and ate some bread and butter they had brought me, I felt so thankful, that the tears very nearly trickled down my cheek, and, I am sorry to say, I felt ashamed at the time of the feeling. We lost no time in trudging on to the place where our other companion was in durance vile ; and when he was safely liberated, this was the moral which the adventure spoke to us all :—

“Mates, take a warning never to quarrel on the road ; never be so pig-headed again as to take your own independent ways, when you can travel together in good company ; and now you are out of this scrape, take care you don't get into another.”



A Dark Night and a Bright Morning.

IT was a wild, wintry night. The wind whistled through the bare trees, and rumbled in the chimneys ; the rain beat against the windows, and the overflowing pipes round the house poured out their streams with a loud noise. But inside the house everything wore an aspect of comfort : the shutters were closed and the blinds drawn ; the fire crackled in the grate and threw out its flashing rays, the lamp was alight on the table. And yet there was an air of sadness in the room, for all its inmates were in deep mourning, Mrs. Russell sat with her work beside her ; Edward sat opposite her with his head resting on his hands, poring over a book ; while Amy was on the footstool at her mother's feet, engaged with her embroidery ; and Annie sat at the piano, now and again striking a few chords, and then turning round to converse. At length she closed the piano, and drawing up her chair to the table, said—

“I don't wonder at poets calling rain the tears of heaven, although I don't know why heaven should weep so often. But I always feel more low-spirited and inclined to cry in rainy weather, and cannot settle down to anything.”

“Perhaps,” said Edward, looking up from his book, “it

would be too strong a compliment to say your eyes are heavenly, and therefore you and heaven sympathise."

Annie laughed, and called him a silly fellow ; and of course Edward said he was only practising against the time he should be expected to say equally gracious things to those who were not his sisters. And then, as it became apparent that Edward would not be able to continue his reading, Annie proposed that they should sing one duet together, as they had not done so for such a long, long time. It was a pretty, plaintive air they sang, an old favourite of the family, and their voices blended in it very sweetly. They had nearly reached the last verse, when Annie heard a gentle sob. She abruptly stopped, and turning round, saw her mamma in tears.

"Dear mamma, I am so grieved that we should have sung that song, the last that poor Harry ever sung with us ; I can't think what made us both forget."

"Never mind, my child, never mind," said Mrs. Russell, brushing away the tears with her handkerchief ; "but I confess I was startled,—I have been thinking so much about my poor boy to-day ; I have seemed to miss him more, and in the beating rain I have fancied that I have heard his voice, and that old tune startled me."

"Come, mother, this won't do," said Edward, giving her a kiss ; "you must not dwell upon your troubles. Thank God there are three of us left to comfort you, although we have been very thoughtless in singing that song, and making you feel more sad."

And then he rattled on with all sorts of nonsense, and tried every little artifice he could devise to make the girls laugh, and so rouse Mrs. Russell from her thoughts. But every artifice was in vain, for all felt that any attempt at merriment was a sham, and soon the little party settled down into moody silence.

Mrs. Russell broke it, and said, as if communing with her own thoughts, rather than addressing the others—

“It was just such a night as this when Harry went away, poor lad! I know his heart was heavy, but how gay and cheerful he was, and what pictures he drew of a soldier’s life! It was always his ambition to be a soldier: when he was quite a child he used to kneel down at my lap and say his prayers (in this very room, too, this was the nursery, you know, then), and pray that God would make him a good soldier; and his great idea of being a man seemed to be that he might be able to fight my battles. And his toys—I have them nearly all upstairs—were little soldier’s toys; and he never tired of beating the drum and blowing the bugle behind the cupboard door there, and then rushing out with his wooden sword to attack the enemy.”

“Now, my dear mamma, why do you tax your strength to talk about these things?” said Amy, “it only makes you ill. Do try and think about something else.”

“I cannot, Amy,” said Mrs. Russell; “to-morrow, you know, is the anniversary of Harry’s birthday, and—”

“Please, Master Edward,” said a servant, opening the door, “a young gentleman from the school wants to see you.”

"Who is it?" asked Edward. "Didn't he give his name?"

"No, sir; but I think it's Captain Fisher's son," said the girl.

"Tell him I'll be down like a shot," said Edward; and turning to Annie, he added, "I shan't bring Tom up to see you all with those red eyes; so make merry if you can, or else I shall not come back till supper-time."

"Well, Tom, old fellow," said Edward, as the two friends sat together in the study, "I hope no ill wind brings you out this wet night?"

"Not a bit of it," said Tom Fisher, "but I come brimful of the queerest news you ever heard. There are no eavesdroppers about, I hope?" said he, rising and examining the door and window with a great show of caution.

"Up to your larks again, Tom, eh! I can see with half an eye all this mystery is nonsense; so out with it at once, —you want to borrow my microscope?"

"No, Edward, I want to talk seriously with you—I do indeed—fen larks." And dropping his voice and settling his features into their very gravest shape, he continued, "Pardon me, old boy, if I wound you,—I don't do it thoughtlessly,—I want to talk to you about your brother Harry."

"About Harry! What can you mean? You know, Tom, that it is only a month or two ago he was killed in the Crimea."

"And that is why I am grieved to talk to you about him. But I have heard some particulars about the engagement in which he lost his life, and I know you will be glad to hear anything that relates to him."

"Oh, yes ; it will be such a satisfaction to poor mother ; and all of us ; for we have heard very little reliable information—only from the newspapers and the war list. But go on, I am all impatience."

"Well, then," said Fisher, "when my father left to join the war—about eighteen months ago that was—he came to say good-bye to your people here, and for the first time he saw your brother. When your brother left, he was quartered near my father, and one day they met and had a long talk over English news. The next time they met was on a field of battle, to take part in that glorious battle beside which all had been child's play in comparison. It was a sad affair though, as you know ; the loss of life was horrible, and the field was stained with England's noblest blood.

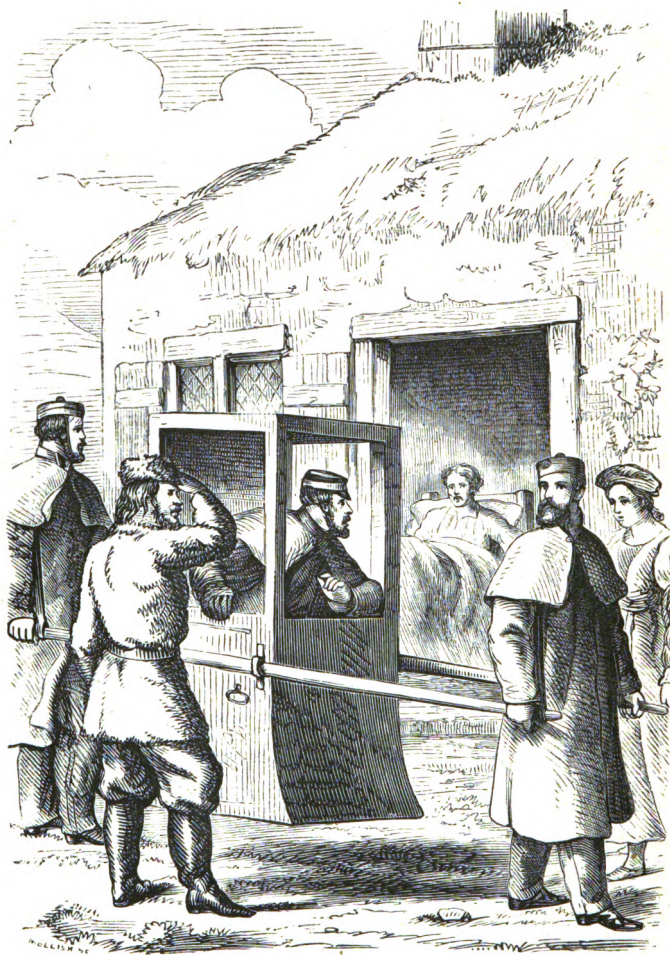
' But things like that, you know, must be
At every famous victory.'

It was there that my father got such terrible wounds, and there, it was said, your poor brother died."

"*It was said!*" repeated Edward. "What do you mean? Did we not see his name among the killed? Was he not buried with all those noble fellows who fought and died with him?"

"No, Ned. Come, don't go wild ; your brother was not killed ; God spared his life, and you'll see him yet."

In a moment, with eyes streaming with tears of joy, and face flushed with the wildest excitement, Edward ran to the



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door, his first impulse being to rush upstairs and tell the news. But Fisher stood with his back to the door, and prevented him.

"Come, old fellow, you must sober yourself before I let you out. Why you would kill your mother by telling her so suddenly, for they say great joy is worse to bear than great grief."

"I think it is," said Edward, sitting down and burying his face in his hands, and then pacing up and down the room. "Go on, Tom," he said, after he had recovered himself a little.

"Well, my father has come back to-day, Ned—such a guy you never saw: arms wounded, head bandaged, legs dependent on crutches, and face as white as a shroud. And he told me your brother was alive, and sent me to break the news to you. And this is how it happened. It seems that when my father was starting for home, he was carried through the country in a sort of sedan-chair, and being very exhausted, and seeing a cottage standing a little way from the road, he gave the attendants the word 'Halt.' When the people came out to him he saw into the room of the cottage, and there an invalid was lying on a rough couch. He gazed on him for a moment, and then—both taken by surprise—they recognised each other, and set up a feeble cry of joy. My father was carried in beside your brother's bed, and told him how all his comrades thought he was killed. And then your brother told his story, how he had received a terrible wound, and had fallen insensible on the

ground. How he lay there a long wearisome time until some cottagers came up and beheld him gasping for breath, gave him water to drink, and carried him to that hut. How he was too ill to be removed, and during a long time of delirium he was tended by these poor people. How, when he got a little better, he found that the news had gone abroad that he was dead, and kind comrades had shed tears over his supposed remains, and how he had determined to keep the secret for the present in case he should never recover. Well, to make the story as short as I can, my father got worse instead of better, and could not leave for England when he wished, and in the meantime your brother got better, and he and my father came home in the same vessel to England."

"Is he well enough to come home? When will he come?" asked Edward in a breath.

"Of course he is shaky, and has got his arm slung up, and all that sort of thing," said Tom; "but he is half crazy with expectation, and will come here the moment you are ready to have him. And now I've told my story, I'll go,—good-bye, old fellow."

"Don't go," said Edward, "stay and help me break the news,—tell a story to them upstairs, and wind in the plot of this."

"I couldn't do it to save my life. I'm awfully shy with women-folk, you know, Ned, and—lor bless you,—I'd rather face a rain of small shot, than three women questioning me at once. No, I'm off, and I wish you luck over your business."

"Tell Harry to come round by the back way to-morrow morning at nine o'clock," said Edward, with all his pluck and purpose roused to the emergency, "and all shall be arranged for his reception."

* * * * *

When Edward, some days afterwards, was talking about the trials of the evening after Fisher had left him, he was heard to declare his belief that he had mistaken his calling, and that nature had designed that he should be a novelist; for no sooner had he returned to his mother and sister, and told them that Captain Fisher had come home from the Crimea, than he had to branch off into the wildest fictions, and invent the most marvellous stories, and account for things in the most unaccountable way. Upon the most delicate foundations of fact he built up wonderful details of escapes and resurrections to life, related how the lists of killed and wounded were often garbled statements, and how, sometimes cases had been known in which people had been for years supposed to be dead, and had at last come home. And then when he had wrought them all up to a pitch of excitement, and had made them in the most anxious state, he capped the whole by narrating a story which Tom Fisher had told him about a young officer who had been rescued from among the dead by some cottagers, and had returned home months afterwards, when every one had long ceased to have a thought that he lived. Very carefully he omitted in the story everything likely to give even a faint clue to Tom Fisher's real story.

It was long after midnight before the little party rose to

retire ; and when they did, all of them were in that miserable state of suspense and doubt which is one of the worst forms of sorrow.

As Edward wished his sisters good-night, he whispered, "Come down in the library in half an hour, I want to speak to you privately,"—and then he broke to them the news.

There were sleepless eyes that night. Mrs. Russell, for long hours, pondered over the improbable stories of Edward, but prayed with a mother's fervour that kind Heaven would yet send her joyful news about her son ; and so vivid grew her imagination, and so earnest her prayers, that before the morning dawn she felt an instinctive certainty that a bright and glorious silver lining was soon to appear above the dark clouds. And there were songs in the night of joyful thanksgiving from Edward and his sisters, as they whispered together for hours about the wanderer's return.

Next morning, as they were seated at breakfast, all bore traces of a sleepless night.

"What a glorious morning it is," said Annie, "so bright and clear after the rain,—all the clouds gone, and nothing but sparkling sunlight !"

"And somehow or other," said Amy, "the melancholy of last night seems to have gone, and we all appear to be in better spirits."

"I, for one, feel ripe for anything," said Edward, "even,"—and he stopped short, for his heart fluttered as he heard a step in the passage.

"Even for what ?" asked Mrs. Russell.

"Well, I was going to say, even for shaking hands with poor Harry, if he were to come suddenly amongst us. But you could not tax your spirits to that extent, mother?"

"Yes, if I could only once more see my boy, and press him to my heart, I could brave anything."

"Then be brave, dear mother, at once," said Edward, for a gentle, nervous tap was heard at the door,— "Harry is alive! and"—

Showers of kisses, sobs of joy, ejaculations of praise, and the long-mourned son was again the joy of his home.





The Mysterious Key.

EVERYBODY in the village knew Charley Baker's father, and everybody liked him. He was one of those happy sort of men who won't grow old ; and his idea of being happy was to gather a group of boys and girls together, and romp with them while "blind man's holiday" lasted, and then draw up his arm-chair to the fire, and make all the youngsters "square round" while he told them stories. One New Year's eve, Charlie and Katie Baker had asked about half a dozen of their friends to come to tea, and when the fire was piled up, and the lamps were lit, they came round Mr. Baker in a body, and clamoured for a story.

"Well, what shall it be?"

"Oh, a good ghost story that will make our blood run cold, and all our skin goose-fleshy," said one.

"No ; let it be about fairies, and how they gave parties, and turned all the wicked people into stumps of trees, and all that sort of thing," said another.

"Tell us a good sea-story," said a young monkey in a monkey jacket ; "all about wrecks, and starvation on rafts, and pirates, and how they got safe to land again at last.

"Well," answered Mr. Baker, "I can't oblige all, so I shall

tell something quite different from any you have proposed. Now fen talking, and I will tell you about 'The Mysterious Key.'"

The old year was dying, and so was good old Matthew Brann. He was lying on a rough couch, drawn up beside the fire; his head was raised by pillows, and a shaded lamp threw a gentle light through the room. His son Philip, a lad about sixteen, was sitting by his side, and every now and then he looked up into the face of the old man, and asked if there was anything he could get him.

"Nothing, lad, nothing," said his father; "all I want now is ready and waiting for me in the other world. But, Philip, this is New Year's night, isn't it?"

"Yes, father," said Philip.

"Well, boy, to-morrow I must keep up the old practice of presenting you with a New Year's gift; and as it is the last I shall ever live to give you, you must prize it very highly, for it is the most valuable thing I have in the world. When you get it, never leave go of it, for there are thieves and robbers, who, if they knew you had it, would not rest easy till they had plundered you."

"What is it, father?" asked Philip, and his eyes sparkled.

"Now, boy, don't look disappointed—it is an old key. But it is set with precious stones, and if you were to put it in the scales with a handful of the most costly rubies it would weigh them down. It is very old; such keys are never made now, and this one has been in use for some hundreds of years.

And Phil," continued the old man, lowering his voice, "it is a charmed key ; there's magic in it, boy ; it can do the most marvellous things—almost miracles."

As he spoke the old man's eyes lighted up with a strange expression, and Philip trembled. He thought his father's brain had wandered, and that his time of departure was at hand. But Matthew Brann went on—

"Phil, I see you are surprised, but I will tell you some of the things that have been done by this mysterious key in my time. I am old, and have gone through many things in my life of which you know little or nothing, but I will tell you some now. Once in my young days I was shut up in prison. It was a terrible dungeon, and I had chains on my hands and chains on my feet, and my heart was heavier than my chains. I was kept there a long time ; I didn't know anybody who would be bail for me, and I thought I should very likely stay there all my life, for I knew the king was very angry with me. But one day, when I was groping about in the dark, I found this key lying amongst some rubbish. I examined it as well as I could, turned it over and over, and thought what use I could make of it. The more I examined it, the more sure I felt that it was no ordinary key, and holding it up to a ray of light which came in through a chink in the cell, I found out that it was set with jewels. But it seemed too small to open the great door which shut me in, and thinking it was too small, I was fool enough to stay for a long, long time without ever trying it. At last I did try : it was a dark night, all was desolate and lonely, and I thought, ' Oh, if I can only escape

by means of this key, how thankful I should be !' So I got up and put the key to the door, and it flew open, and I escaped. Yes ; and no sooner was I outside of the prison than the light fell upon the key, and I saw it was all ablaze with glittering jewels. So I put it in my bosom, and there I have kept it ever since."

"Did nobody ever claim it, father?" asked Philip, who was quite excited with the narration.

"Many tried to take it, Phil, but strange to say they never succeeded. And soon after I had it I found that my family name was engraved upon it; but *why* it should have been I never could make out, and so I had no fear of keeping it."

"And did it ever help you out of any other scrapes, father?"

"Yes, boy, many. Once I was in a battle-field, and the dead and the dying were lying about me, and an enemy shot at me, and if it hadn't been that I had got this key he would have wounded me to the heart. And once——" But the old man's voice failed him, and his breathing grew short and heavy, and it was clear that death was coming near.

"Phil," he said, and he put his hands on his son's head, "God bless you, boy! You will find—the key—under my pillow—to-morrow.—It is my last—New Year's gift.—Call my friends." And those were the last words he spoke. Philip called the friends, and they watched together through the night.

Next morning Matthew Brann was dead, and Philip stole into the room, and kissed that cold pale brow and stroked

back the snowy hair. Then he put his hand under the pillow, and drew forth "The Mysterious Key;" and all through life it was as useful to him as it was to his father.—And so ends my story.

All the children looked in blank astonishment at Mr. Baker. "But what was the key?" "Where did it come from?" "Was it set with real jewels?" they asked.

"That I am going to let you find out, for I am going to give each one of you the same kind of New Year's gift that Matthew Brann gave to Philip;" and, moving aside his chair, he reached down a parcel which had been secretly put up in the bookcase, and gave to each—a Bible!





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The Bird's Visit.

A LITTLE bird with gay and beautiful plumage was perched on the mast of a ship which was nearing the coast of England. For many a summer night it had sung its foreign songs to the captain and his crew, and they had left food for it on the cross-trees as a reward for its talent. Often the sailors had wanted to catch the bird, or shoot it, so that they might take it home as a curiosity, but the captain had promised a little lass, one of the passengers, that no harm should come to birdie if he could help it.

"I wonder why the bird has left its own home and country," said the child. "Poor little thing! it will be sure to be caught when it gets to England, or pecked to death by bigger birds, who will not like the foreigner."

"Birdie did not know when he was well off," said the captain. "I dare say he thought all other countries were better than his own, but he'll soon find out 'there's no place like home.'"

It was a beautiful summer evening; the ship was proudly dashing through the crested waves, and the white cliffs of Albion were but a few miles off. The green trees were

spreading their wide branches abroad, and the ripening corn was waving in the fields; the sun was soon about to sink behind the hills, but ere it went it shed a golden glory over the landscape.

The passengers stood on the deck of the ship gazing with loving eyes on their dear native land; and as they stood, the little bird, full of glee, flew from mast to mast in a flutter of joy, and then coyly bending its head to those who had been its friends during the voyage, set up such a jubilant warble, that all ceased talking to listen to its song. Its clear notes rang through the still air, and every merry song it knew it sang, until at last it flew nearer and nearer to the deck, and then in a wild and plaintive way seemed rather to talk than to sing.

"Birdie is going, captain; I'm sure he is saying Farewell," said the little passenger, and hardly had she spoken when the bird flew up in the air with a loud trill-la trill-la. With tearful eyes the child watched it until it became a mere speck in the distance and then faded out of sight.

Over the mazy Kentish hop-gardens, through the scented meadows, and round the smiling hill-slopes, the foreign bird flew, and its heart was all a-flutter with the wonders it heard and saw. Then it settled upon a twig of a tree, listening to the chorus of sweet songsters filling the air with music. "They really don't sing badly," said the bird to himself; "I wonder if it would be safe to venture amongst them and introduce myself before the night sets in."

The song of the birds came from a large oak whose

spreading branches seemed like a green world of itself to the wondering foreigner. "I will rest upon that branch, and soon let them know I am here;" so saying he flew on to the bushy limb of the tree, and with his head turned upwards sent forth a glorious burst of song, which soared beyond and retained its distinctness above the chorus.

"Trill-la, trill-la-la, trill-la-la-la," sang the bird. The chorus was hushed, and in surprise the British songsters listened. A fresh strain, with richer melody and wider scope, now rose from and the little exile, down the tree, branch by branch, the birds came hopping until, by the time the song was finished, every bough and twig was inhabited, and the foreign bird felt like a monarch surrounded by his court. Gaily he turned round to bow to the assembly and show the beautiful tints of his gorgeous robes with which the clothing of the gayest English bird could not compare; and when the buzz of voices was hushed, he sat tranquilly upon his leafy throne anxiously waiting to see what would be his reception.

"Who will speak to the stranger?" said a thrush, who, being bigger than many present, thought perhaps something would be expected from him.

"Not I, or any of my family," said a sparrow, "we are in far too humble a way of life to represent such an assembly as this."

"It is such an unseasonable hour, or I would," said the lark.

"I am not in voice yet," said a very juvenile nightingale, "or I might be tempted to do so."

A loud ha ! ha ! came from a hollow in the tree, and an owl, blinking wildly as it put its head out from a hole, said, "I'm your man !" Whereat all the birds burst out into a loud, merry laugh, and the foreign bird, thinking this was an ovation to him, rose gracefully and bowed. A bullfinch, with considerable presence of mind, seized the occasion, made himself master of the position, and raising his voice to a loud pitch, sang, "Welcome, stranger." All the birds took the cue, and what none dared to do alone they contrived to do very well together. The air rang again with welcomes.

"Friends," cried the foreigner as soon as their song had ceased, "I thank you ; from my heart I thank you. I am a stranger here ; I come from the sunny south ; my home is in the feathery palm ; my food is the rich fruit which your country cannot grow. I have travelled long over the deep blue sea, and I have only just arrived on your shores. I am thankful to have found so many friends upon my arrival." This speech, which was uttered in a strain of emotion, and yet with a great deal of pride, did not seem quite satisfactory.

One of the finch family alone expressed anything like an opinion, and said to a neighbour, "Poor thing !" But the owl said in a hoarse whisper to a bat, "I'll keep *my eye* on that gentleman, and that's more than you dare say."

"I come to this land once a year," said a swallow ; "I, like yourself, am a foreigner, and I always find a welcome here. But why have you travelled thus far ?" he asked.

"I have seen many trials in my life," answered the foreigner. "Beautiful as my home is, in the palm-tree far away, it is never safe. There are birds of prey which keep us all in constant fear ; there are animals and insects whose lives are devoted to our destruction ; there are human foes who track our flight and carry my countrymen away to furnish their museums ; and we have angry storms which dash our dwellings to the ground, and lightning strokes which fill us with alarm ; and when the winter weather comes, our friends, the flowers, pine away and die, the song of the waving palm is hushed, and all nature seems full of sorrow."

"All that may be true, we take thy word for it ; but are those the reasons which brought you here?" asked a grave-looking thrush.

"Not those alone," answered the foreigner. "I am married and have had much trouble, not only with my wife, but my family too. The fact is, my family have not turned out well ; they have left their home, for they were never trained by their mother to respect and love it, and my nest is left desolate."

"And your wife?"

"My wife and I had words ; she flew away farther towards the sunny south, and I—am here. Shall I find a welcome ? may I make my home amongst you?"

"Friend," said the thrush, in a grave but gentle tone, "thou art welcome here ; to-night thou canst find shelter in this British oak. To-morrow I will show thee this goodly land. But, friend, thou hast not done well in leaving thy home and spouse ; thou hast not done well in seeking a better home

than that which He who made us all hast ordained for thee. And thou hast forgotten, friend, that all nature has its seasons of pleasure and pain, and that joy and sorrow roam hand in hand from North to South and East to West of the whole world. There are no birds of Paradise now, friend, although some assume the name."

"I would see for myself," answered the foreigner, "but I thank you for what you have said. To-night I will accept the shelter you offer, and to-morrow I shall be glad to accompany so sage a guide. But, friends, I am keeping you from your nests; I thank you all for your kindness to an exile from home."

The foreigner rose and flew beside the thrush, expecting to see him retire at once; but not a wing stirred amid all that assembly. At length a burst of song gushed forth; it was their evening hymn, the same sweet hymn which was sung in the sunny south, the hymn which all the annual visitants from foreign shores knew, and it touched the heart of the little exile as he thought of his kindred singing their song, and he pined for home and was sad. Then with many a kind word and friendly good-night the birds flew off to their several homes.

As the grey streaks of dawn came forth to herald the day the birds began to stir, but the foreigner, unused to the slow process of daybreak, was still slumbering when the thrush came and aroused him, saying—

"We have a proverb, friend, that 'the early bird picks up the worm;' so we will go seek our breakfast, and then start on our tour."

The delicate little exile shuddered at the thought of worms for breakfast, and sighed for the golden insects and sparkling flies of its native land. As the sun came up from its ocean bed the two birds started off. Everything around was beautiful and fair, smiling sunbeams danced among the flowers and woke them from their slumbers, nature's glad voices were all ringing out their merry strains, the streamlets leapt among the waving rushes, and drew the sheep and cattle to share their sport. Bright-eyed children came to the cottage doors welcoming the morn, and the labourers went forth through the field-paths to their work, with the light hearts which rest gives to honest labour.

"This is a glorious country," said the foreigner; "it is almost Eden."

"All the world is beautiful," answered the thrush; "but every day has a night, every rose has a thorn, every glad heart has its sorrows. Now let me show thee that I speak the truth."

They entered a forest and alighted on a branch. The heavy thud of an axe echoed through the wood; presently a great crash was heard, and an elm lay, like a fallen monarch, on the earth. There, at their feet, lay scattered a nest full of broken eggs; there lay some little unfledged birds gasping with fear, while the mother bird cried wildly for help and no help came. Away they flew until they reached a moor, and the thrush pointed out a large net, in the meshes of which many captives were struggling. Then they flew into a garden, and watched some boys as with shouts of joy they captured two little birds.

They had unwarily alighted on some bird-lime, from which they could not rise again. Now as they flitted through a wood the report of a gun startled them. Then as they passed a stately mansion they gazed upon foreign prisoners in golden cages. "Alas! alas!" said the exiled bird, "there is sorrow here as great, or greater, than in my own land."

"Sorrow and joy go hand in hand," gravely answered the thrush; "but *we* have no cause to complain. Come and see other sights."

They rested in a garden beside a rose-bush; the buds were bursting forth, but the roses were not there; a blight was on the tree, which ate away at the heart of every flower until it died. They entered a valley—the sheltered home of a pure lily; the air was rich with its odour, and the fair lily was smiling sweetly, and playfully nodding its head as the gentle breeze moved its leaves, and they kissed and separated, and kissed and separated again; but beside the lily grew a nettle, and the same passing breeze that made the leaves to kiss, beat the nettle against the lily, and stung it. They saw a stately tree which had been stricken with lightning, and it was weeping itself to death because of the dead branch that lay at its foot. And last of all they passed through churchyards where men, for whom all nature was created, were being laid low, and "the mourners went about the streets."

As evening came the two birds returned to the tree where they had met the company the night before, and when the pleasant greetings were over, the foreign bird thus addressed them :—

“Friends, I have seen your land ; I have seen its beauties and its glory ; but I love my own more for having seen yours. I have learnt to-day, thanks to my good friend here [pointing to the thrush], that both lands are full of beauty, but there is sorrow in each. And I have learnt that He who made us has placed us where He sees fit : you in your land, I in mine. I have been wrong to think that I was hardly dealt with because my life was not all sunshine and joy, and I am going back to my native land to tell my people there that it is the lot of life to have both joy and sorrow, but that there is a thousand-fold more joy if we only seek to make joy in everything while we can, by keeping merry and contented hearts, and if the sorrow comes, bearing it with all the fortitude we can : and now farewell.”

Next morning the little foreigner was on the deep blue sea, and soon after he reached his home in safety. His first care was to seek his wife and children, to whom he was again united, and the substance of his story when he had narrated all his travels was,—“I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”





Danger and Deliberance.

A STORY OF NEW ZEALAND.

FATHER, there's mischief brewing," said my boy to me, as I came into the room one night after a hard day's work in the field, "I'm sure of it, but I have not breathed a word about it to a single creature. Oh, father——"

"Why, boy, you are pale and trembling! What's the matter? who has been frightening you?"

"Eru," said he, and his eyes glistened as he tried to hold back a tear which his excitement was forcing out.

"Eru?" I answered, "why he is the best fellow in Taranaki. He has only been having some fun with you, and you haven't seen his joke clearly."

"No, father; I have always loved Eru more than all the other natives, and he has always been kind and good to me. But Eru means mischief; he has got some dark plot in his mind."

"I suppose," said I, laughing, "he has been telling you some wild story about one of his dead chiefs coming to life again, or about some of the birds in the bush talking like

human beings, or telling horrible tales about the old battles—eh?”

“No, father, he hasn’t, indeed; and I always like his stories, because they are very funny, and I know they are not true. Eru has hardly spoken to me all day; but I have been watching him, and I can tell by his fierce look and strange manner that something is going to happen.”

I could see by my boy’s manner that it was no fancy which agitated him. I knew that he was a very Cœur-de-Leon for such a lad. I did not for a moment doubt his courage, and all at once the thought rushed across my mind, “What if the people are about to engage in another war!” It was not many months before, that the greatest alarm had prevailed among the English settlers in consequence of a threatened revolt of the native tribes, and some terrible massacres had occurred. But in my neighbourhood all the natives were most friendly, and I had never in my dealings with them for years had the least cause to suspect treachery among them. “To be forewarned is to be forearmed,” and I was determined to listen to all my son had to tell, and to act upon what I heard.

“Now, Gilbert,” said I, closing the doors and windows, so that we might not be heard, for I employed a considerable number of natives on the farm, “tell me what makes you suspect Eru of plotting mischief.”

“What first made me suspect Eru was that he has been very dull lately, and has muttered to himself over his work, and hasn’t had any games with me, but always seemed as if he had got a good deal to think about. And this morning at prayers

I saw him counting his fingers, and then counting the holes in the cane-bottomed chair, and——”

“And I suspect your thoughts were where they ought not to have been, to have seen all that,” said I, half smiling, “but have you any proof?”

“Yes, father, lots ; but I wondered why he was counting ; somehow I could not help thinking he was going to battle, and was counting the men ; and I don’t know what should have put it in my head, but I thought the number he counted on his fingers were the white people on this farm, and the number of holes in the chair the natives, and that set me thinking, and I determined to watch him all day. When you went out this morning, Eru loitered behind, and when nobody was in the kitchen he took down that big blunderbuss that hangs on the wall. Is it loaded?”

“No ; I never like to keep loaded fire-arms in the house, you know,” I answered.

“Well, father, Eru took it into the shed and loaded it ; and when nobody sees you, you can go and draw the charge, just to see if that isn’t one proof that he means mischief. Well, then there’s another thing. Isn’t it very strange that that tall strong pole which supported the vine should have been broken yesterday ?”

“Not very strange,” I said ; “I know Eru broke it, but he lost his hold of the ladder, and as he grasped hold of the pole the thin part of it snapped, and the branch which rested on it fell, but I don’t think there was anything singular in that.”

“I do, father. You look at the pole ; it would never have

broken if there hadn't been a good blow on it with the hatchet first, and that blow I saw Eru give. And he did it with a purpose; for to-day, when you told him to look out for a taller and stronger one, as the vine is growing, where do you think he went for it?"

"Into the Manuka-scrub, or the Bush-gully by the river," said I.

"No; he waited till this evening, and then went up on to the hill range for it, and he is now setting it in the ground. And I know why he went up the hill. Father, look out of the window. See, he has set fire to the fern up there, and I feel sure that is a signal for something."

I felt so proud of the courage and discretion of my boy, that I could not help giving him a kiss on the forehead, and telling him he was the noblest fellow in the island (which I firmly believed). But now came the question, what was to be done? Should I call the men together and tell them my fears? should I try to extort the truth from Eru, and appeal to the nobler feelings of his better nature?

"Gilbert," I said, "I don't know what to do. I feel sure that there is some mischief brewing, as you say; and I fear that there is great and immediate danger. What is to be done; you have thought so much about it, have you thought of a plan?"

"Yes, father, saddle all the horses; send mamma and the girls and grandfather away to the town for protection, and let us stay and defend the place to the last."

Even in that great perplexity I could not help smiling with

admiration at the noble pluck of the boy ; but the night was advancing, the danger that surrounded us was an unknown one, and the plan did not seem feasible. My father, an old grey-headed man, who for years had been a friend of the natives, and an honoured minister among them, entered the room just at this stage of proceedings, and I thought I could not have better counsellors than the experience of age and the impulse of youth ; so I very briefly told him all the news.

“God preserve these poor deluded people from the sin of bloodshed and violence for the sake of cattle and plunder, Gilbert !” he said to me. “Suppose an attack should be made upon us to-night, what can twenty men do against a hundred, and perhaps some of those twenty are our enemies? God only knows. We have but one resource ; our strength and safety are in God ; let us pray to Him, and He will teach us what to do.”

I confess with shame that this was a resource which never entered my head, and I sympathised with Gilbert junior, whose hands were clenched and eyes flashing with excitement as he chafed at the delay. But my good old father, in a brief earnest prayer, led our thoughts and our prayers with his, and we all seemed to feel a strange confidence after that appeal to Almighty aid. As we rose from our knees, I looked through the window, and saw that, according to custom on the hot summer nights, the supper was being laid in the verandah, and I yielded to my father's wish that everything should go on as usual.

As we sat round the table, my wife and I, and my children

and father, a stranger would never have imagined that some of us were in the possession of a terrible secret, and all on the verge of great danger. And perhaps those round the table would never have guessed it had it not been for Gilbert. There was a pause in the conversation ; his eyes were bent towards the hill, and presently he started, and with a thrill of emotion he seized my arm, and said, " Oh, father ! "

All started in wonder. " Sit still,—do not move,—don't turn your heads," he cried in a low voice. " Father, Eru is creeping through the flax and brush-wood leading towards the hill. I saw him."

Now I was bound to tell them all I feared.

" Try not to be alarmed," I said ; " keep up a good heart, and trust in God. All our trust must be in Him ; man's help is vain. There is a conspiracy among the natives against us, and——"

" The flax and brushwood yonder are full of natives. I see them creeping towards us," said my father. " Now let us commend ourselves to God. For His sake, for your sakes, be calm. Do as I bid you. In His name who hears prayer I command you. Let us all kneel and implore His aid."

There was a calmness about my father which was sublime. Not a muscle of the old man's face moved, but his eyes seemed lit up with celestial fire. As an army rushes into the jaws of death at the irresistible command of their chief, so we, although there were beating hearts and pale ashen faces amongst us, fell down on our knees. The girls clung to their chairs, and their forced, panting breath was the only sound,

until my father, with his clear ringing voice, which had sounded in every village for miles round the sweet music of the gospel of peace, began to pray.

Scarcely had he commenced, when we were conscious that the garden was surrounded. The thick flax, which had not been cut down that season, grew close to the fence, providing a complete ambuscade for our enemies, till within a few yards of the place where we knelt. I could not bear the suspense, it seemed worse than death ; I raised my eyes. I shall never forget the sight as long as I live. It was the dusk of evening, the twilight was dying away, and in the uncertain light I could see all round the garden the painted faces and white feathers of the natives. Some with bludgeons in their hands, some with rifles and swords, and all in a crouching attitude, ready at a signal to rise and fall upon us with their fearful war-cry. My father had evidently seen the sight too. He raised his voice, and with all the passion of eloquence, and the mysterious *power* of prayer, he called upon God to bless us, to keep us in safety, to bless the little ones, to cause prosperity and peace to dwell in the land, to let those who once sat in darkness continue to rejoice in the light of the Lord. And there was not a rustle among the waving flax, not a sound save our struggling breath, as we knelt through those awful moments. I dared to raise my eyes once more, and through the growing darkness I could distinguish the face of Eru. He was waving the people back. My father must have seen it too. He prayed for Eru ; prayed that he might be a faithful servant,

and as he had professed to love the true God, that he might never be the guilty coward to fear ever to show to all that he did love and serve Him in truth and sincerity.

I know not whether my father prayed for minutes or hours. None of us knew—it seemed an age ; but before he concluded we were conscious that the enemies surrounding us had withdrawn. We heard the rustle in the flax grow fainter and fainter, till it died away. And even after that the prayer continued. When it ceased, my father said,—

“Rise, beloved ones, God has heard us. Go quietly in doors ; do not exhibit hurry or fear, in case we are watched.”

We obeyed instinctively, and then, once in-doors, the pent-up excitement found vent. Tears were welcome guests, and relieved the almost bursting hearts. But that night we were all preserved in safety. No harm came near to us or our dwelling.

Next morning Eru confessed all. He had been bribed and urged to conduct a band of rebels to our farm. Their object was plunder, and they had meant to drive off all our cattle, and take all we had, to store themselves, as the tribes had concerted an attack upon the neighbouring settlement. But Eru was to be their leader, and on him devolved the task of giving the signal for the attack. The voice of my father, which had often before quelled disturbances among the tribes, and was always a magic power with them, riveted them, kept them spell-bound, and not a man dared to commence the attack. The peace was only temporary, and when the impression was worn off, a feeling of vexation

followed, and further attacks were planned, but Eru became our faithful ally, and we were able to escape to the garrison with our lives and property.

“Father,” Gilbert said to me one day, “I believe there is miraculous power in a firm, steady eye, a voice that doesn’t quiver and quaver, and a strong, resolute courage.”

“And I believe,” said my father, “that there is miraculous power in prayer.”





“Left his Home.”

T was a bright sunny morning in May, one of those fresh, cheerful mornings which come as the special heralds of a glorious season, and seem to give a start to Nature for developing the treasures of Spring. Everything around seemed to speak of peace and happiness ; and if you had looked at Woody Farm, down in the dingle, surrounded by the sturdy old trees which had braved generations of winters, you would have said, “There is a picture of peace !” The sunbeams were dancing upon the pond facing the house, and the ducks were in their element ; the fowls were picking up the scattered grain, and their gay plumes glistened in the sunlight ; the cows were standing about the yard in sober, contemplative moods, contentedly chewing the cud ; the horses were scampering round the fields as if they thought that was the best way of paying homage to so bright a morning. The farmhouse looked as if it had been newly done up ; the ivy which clustered round the windows had been washed by the April showers, and was now fresh and green. The face of the old dial on the house-front shone in the sunlight, and the green verandah round the porch was proudly helping the

early creepers to climb up and nestle round it. And from their leafy homes in the ivy the birds were flying hither and thither, each little voice trying its hardest to swell the chorus of praise.

But no one seemed astir in the house ; a few farm-labourers were in the yard, preparing the horses for ploughing, and attending to the cattle ; but the house was quiet. You would not have thought that in such a scene there could be sorrow,—that while all was joyous spring time without, there could be winter within. And yet that was the case.

Mr. Barclay had come down that morning as usual early, and had gone over the farm to see that all had gone well through the night, and then returned to the house to breakfast.

“Well, mother,” said he to his wife, “this looks well for a good season ; we haven’t had such a morning as this for a longful time. But where’s George ? The idle dog is under the blankets, I suppose ; and such a morning as this too !”

“I called him at the usual time, but I don’t know whether he heard me ; but I suppose he was tired last night, for he was very quiet. Pour out the coffee, Henry, and I will run up and call him again.”

Mr. Barclay poured out the coffee, and then took up the last week’s newspaper which lay on the table, and began to glance it over, waiting till his wife should return.

He had not to wait long ; in a few moments Mrs. Barclay came running down ; her face was very pale, and she looked bewildered.

"Oh Henry! George is not upstairs."

"Then, my dear, he did appreciate the morning, and has gone out for a canter, I dare say," answered Mr. Barclay.

"But what makes you look so alarmed?"

"George did not sleep at home last night; his bed has not been lain upon;" and, unable to restrain her emotion, she burst into tears.

"Come, come, my dear, don't make yourself uneasy about nothing; it is only some boyish freak, and we shall soon get to the bottom of it," said Mr. Barclay, as cheerfully as he could; but his face was a shade paler, and the big rough hand trembled. "Let us go upstairs and see if we cannot find out what has become of him."

George's bedroom was on the first floor, just over the verandah; it looked out upon the pond and the clump of trees, and was a model of comfort. There was his fishing-rod over the book-case, and a gun fastened up by slings over the mantel-piece. There was a glass case with some skeleton mice, which he had taken such pains to prepare after burying them in ant-hills. There was his first drawing framed and glazed. There were his skates, brightly polished, hanging up against the wall ready for next winter. But, George was not there. Mr. Barclay eagerly opened his clothes drawer, and started as he found that his clothes were gone. He opened a case to see if the old gold watch, which his grandfather had given him before he died, was there—it was gone. He opened George's writing-desk in case there were any papers which might give him a clue. There

was only one, it was a savings-bank book, and Mr. Barclay turned to an entry which had been made only a day or two before, and showed that George had withdrawn all his savings from the bank.

The hot tears were rolling from their eyes, as they left the room and went down-stairs. The untouched breakfast was before them. As they sat down without speaking, old Carlo, who lay before the fire, ceased wagging his tail when he found there was no caress or whistle for him, and after he had looked well into his master's face, and seen that something was wrong, he came and licked his hand and whined.

A few moments only were allowed for indulgence in sorrow.

"My love," said Mr. Barclay, brushing away the tear from his cheek, "we must be up and doing; and our first step is to ask our Father to guide us in finding our child."

Side by side on the oaken floor the father and mother knelt, and with voices choked sometimes with emotion and then clear with confidence and hope, they pleaded with God on behalf of their son, and implored counsel how to act.

Half an hour more and all was bustle in Woody Farm. A horse was waiting at the door to bear Mr. Barclay away to the nearest town to try and find traces of his son; John Edwards, the faithful old servant, who had lived at Woody Farm before Mr. Barclay was born, was to go to another adjacent town in an opposite direction; Mrs. Barclay was to go to the printer's at once, and have a handbill printed

describing George, and offering a reward to any one who would give information respecting him, and this was to be forwarded to all the large towns in the county.

And now all were started on their errands, with hope and fear struggling in each heart. It was a touching sight to see the dark cloud fall over the little household of Woody Farm on that bright spring morning. Would the sunshine ever come again?

Late at night Mr. Barclay returned home. He had been vainly riding from town to town, and village to village, everywhere with the same errand, everywhere without success. At last, as evening was drawing on, and he was many miles from home, and as he felt sure he had come in the wrong direction, and was as hopeful that his faithful old servant, John Edwards, had gone in the right, he determined to give up the search for the present, until he should have been home again and heard if any clue had reached them.

Mrs. Barclay started from her seat, as she heard the rattle of a horse's hoofs along the avenue. The farm servants, who were sitting in the door-porch—for the night was warm and clear, and they all felt such a deep interest in their master and mistress that they entered into their sorrow more as if they were children than servants—ran forward to meet him; but they drew aside, as Mrs. Barclay, with pale face and streaming eyes, ran past them, to be the first to welcome back her husband and, perhaps, her son. But in an instant she saw that her hopes were disappointed, and the short, husky words, "No tidings," went to her heart. She, too, in turn answered,

in reply to the anxious look of Mr. Barclay, "No tidings," and leaning against her husband, who with bowed head still sat in the saddle, wept aloud. It was a scene of despair. All was hushed and quiet; not one of the party stirred; all were wrapped in a common sorrow. Even the bright moonbeams vanished behind a cloud during those few moments of bitter grief. Perhaps if the dead body of their son had been lying before them they would not have felt so sad.

"Come, my wife," said Mr. Barclay, recovering himself with an effort, and getting down from the saddle, "we must not give up like this; there is yet hope; perhaps good John Edwards has got some news to cheer us." And, gently leading her away, they entered the house.

Perhaps you have been in a house where Death has been an inmate; you have noticed how quietly everybody has walked about; how every voice has been hushed to a whisper; how strange and unnatural the house has looked; how, if a reference has been made to the dead one, the name has been omitted, and they have said, "This was *his* room," or, "That was where *she* sat." So it was in Woody Farm. There was a gloom as dark and heavy as the gloom of death; none of the servants spoke of "Master George," but in a low whisper asked, "Has anything been heard of *him*?" Very tenderly and carefully they had removed as many mementos of him as they could, to check the sorrowful thoughts of Mrs. Barclay; but when they said, "Cheer up, ma'am, he will soon come back; it is only some boy's trick he is playing," they said it without hope in their tones, and they felt, that to attempt

consolation in words was only to probe, without assisting to heal, the wounds.

But as the father and mother sat together that night, they talked for long, long hours about their son.

"Oh why has he left us, Henry?" said Mrs. Barclay; "has he felt home to be a restraint? have we never had his full love? have we made him too much our idol? and is this the way we are to be taught not to love too much?"

"I cannot see a clue to the mystery, my love. He has always seemed to love us as he did in his childish prattling days. I have noticed a sort of reserve he has had lately, but I have put that down as a peculiarity of his time of life, when character begins to develop. But I am afraid—" and he paused.

"Afraid of what, Henry? Do tell me all you think—all you fear."

"I am afraid he has been led astray by bad company. I feel sure that visit he paid to the young Maxwells, during their college vacation, did him injury. I think that must have unsettled his love for home. And I know he has some companions in the market-town, and his frequent journeys there for me, on business, have given him the opportunity of fostering any bad influences that may have been at work."

"But why should he go away? He was always so frank and open; he never hid his likes or dislikes from us; if he felt home a restraint, why did he not tell us?"

"Ah, why, indeed," answered Mr. Barclay, with a sigh; "but you know, my love, how powerful temptation is at all

times, and how that power increases a thousand-fold if yielded to instead of resisted. Poor George!" he said, as the tears rolled down his cheeks; "my worst fears are that he is led captive by Satan at his will; and how utterly miserable we should be if we could not feel that 'the stronger than the strong man armed' can yet release him."

The hours rolled away; it was nearly day-break, and the parents still sat talking and patiently waiting for the arrival of John Edwards. At last, the well-known step was heard in the porch, and the old man, worn out with fatigue, came into the room.

"Well, John," said Mr. Barclay, shaking him by the hand and drawing up a chair beside him.

"Well, master," said John, "this has been a heavy day. Perhaps the sun has been a-shining and perhaps it hasn't,—it didn't seem to shine on me. Perhaps the birds has been a-singing, but they all seemed to be like ravens to me. Perhaps—"

"Oh, John, tell us, have you heard of George?" interrupted Mrs. Barclay, for she could not, at that anxious time, bear the old man's style, which was so natural to him that he could not divest himself of it, even on such an occasion.

"I am coming to it, ma'am, soon coming to it," answered John, and he stroked his bald head, as if to collect into shape the thoughts her remark had scattered. "A dull, heavy day; but I rode into the town, and I went up this street and down that street, and I says to one, 'You don't happen to ha' seen Mast'r George this morning, do yer?' And up and down

first this street and then that, but no one had seen him. So I thought to myself—”

“Come, John,” said Mr. Barclay, “never mind that now; do, for pity’s sake, tell us at once.”

It was a great effort; an effort which John Edwards had never been known to achieve for the past twenty years; but in a moment he broke through his style, and said abruptly—

“Praise the Lord, sir, he’s yet alive. He’s out on the great sea; he’s been led astray; he’s been caught in the snare of the fowler. But cheer up, sir, and missus, he’s Mast’r George still.”

Long weary years passed by, and strange events had happened at Woody Farm. But amid all the changes that had taken place some things remained the same. George’s bedroom was just as it was on that sad morning when Mrs. Barclay discovered that he had left his home. His fishing-rod and gun, his skeleton mice and skates, all remained as they were. The old grove of trees still stood like faithful sentinels round the house, the sunbeams still glanced on the duck pond, and new generations of birds still sang from their homes in the ivy.

But George, was he the same? No, the youth had passed into the man, the merry laughing eye and fresh ruddy face had so changed, that no one who had known him in the old school days would ever have recognised him. A hard, rough, perilous life, the influences of climate, the still worse influences of a loose and evil career, had all left their traces upon him.

Bitterly had he mourned the day when he yielded to temptation and left that happy, quiet home ; often, in the strange lands he visited, he had pined and sighed for rest, that rest which can only be obtained when the mind is at ease. He made money, made friends, saw the world, gained the independence which he longed for when an inmate of his father's house, but instead of conveying him pleasure, all these things but added to his misery, for conscience told him these were the wages of sin. Dark and dreary is the world to him who has no home. George felt, as years wore away, he could not live without once more seeing the dearest spot on earth to him. Oh, if he could but hear his father say that the past was forgiven and forgotten, if he could but feel his mother's kiss again, as in the former days ; if he could but gaze upon the scenes with which he had been familiar in the happy days of innocence, what a weight it would remove from his heart ! That kind Providence which sends blessings on the just and the unjust, and moves in such mysterious ways to perform its wonders, devised a plan.

One wild dark night, George was out on the ocean, once more bound to England. Often since he first left the shores of his native land, had he revisited them, but only for a short time, and then to embark upon some fresh and perilous adventure. Now, as the vessel neared the coast, the winds and the waves arose, a fearful storm swept over the waters, lashing them to fury. The ship rode gallantly over the angry waves, but the hearts of all on board sank within them, as, carried by the irresistible force of the tempest, every wave brought them

nearer and nearer to the fatal shore. Vain was the help of man, all efforts to manage the ship were useless, it was the plaything of the storm. On it came, with a dreadful speed, until at last, amid the loud cries of strong men in their agony, and weak men in their frenzied fear, it dashed upon the rocks. Many were on board, many struggled with the waves, and swam till power failed, but one man only reached the shore alive. That man was George. All his worldly goods were lost, all his companions perished, but he was saved. Penniless, ragged, bruised in body, and broken in heart, he wandered away from the dreadful scene. Why did he start and tremble with a strange wild fear as he limped along that weary road?

It was a road he knew. It was the road leading to the seaport town not many miles from his father's home. Oh how he wept, as the old familiar scenes burst upon him! "To return home thus," he said, as he looked upon his tattered garments, and thought of the loss of all he had in the wide world, "I dare not go, I can never look into those beloved faces again. No, I would rather die under this hedge-row," and he threw himself down by the road side and indulged his grief. But he could not resist the yearning of his heart. He felt that he *must* go on, and that he could not start off again into the wide and dreary world without first seeing, if only at a distance, his dear home.

As he walked along he heard the chime of the village bells, and soon the ivy-mantled steeple was in sight. Thither he bent his way; he would walk to the old churchyard, where some of his early schoolfellows had found a resting place, and

from that spot he could see the dell in which lay Woody Farm. Timidly he opened the churchyard gate, fearing lest he should be seen and recognised, and walked through that well-known place till he caught sight of his home. Then he yielded to the rush of feeling, he fell upon the grass, and, leaning his head upon a green mound, he wept aloud. But bitter as his grief was then, it was as nothing compared with that which he felt when, gazing round, he beheld his mother's grave.

All night long he rested his weary limbs on the grassy mound, facing his mother's grave ; but his heart was not at rest. How it bled as he thought of the cruel wrong he had done, of the hard ingratitude he had shown for all her tender love and devotion to him ! Oh, what would he not have given to have recalled one hour of the past, to have clasped again that hand which had nursed him in infancy, smoothed his bed in sickness, and had gently led and guided him, or to have heard that voice which was now singing the song of the angels, say to him again, as in days of yore, "God bless you, my child."

Heart-broken and weary, as the hours rolled away, George fell asleep ; and as he slept he dreamt he saw his mother's form ; he thought he saw her pointing to the tablet, while she fixed her eyes solemnly and mournfully on him. Then he saw her kneeling on the green turf, and raising her hands in supplication to heaven, and *he* was the burden of the prayer. The chiming of the hour roused the sleeper, and the dream changed. He was once more in the life of his childhood ; the school-bell was ringing, and he "with satchel on his back, and smiling morning face, creeping like snail unwillingly to school." There

were his old companions and friends, and there at the school porch stood the master.

At length he woke, and started with horror as the bright dreams all vanished, and he gazed upon his torn and tattered garments, and felt the heavy burden still upon his heart. It was not until long after the golden hues of the morning sun had tinted the scene around that George left his lonely couch. But he had made the resolve, "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am not worthy to be called thy son."

Weak and trembling, he tottered along, through the green lane, through the woody avenue, until he reached the house. Then he rested against the wall, and glanced timidly, anxiously, into the window. Oh, what a sight met his gaze! There was his father resting his white head upon his thin worn hand, reading the Word of God. There were the servants seated round, listening to the voice from heaven, and there in the chimney-corner, bent with age, sat old John Edwards.

George staggered into the room, and only one word burst from his lips—"Father!"

It was enough. A cry of joy burst from the old man, and father and son were clasped in each other's arms!

A parable upon a parable. The lesson of this sad story is told in the history of the Prodigal Son. You who are young in life, ponder the lesson. Perhaps you are sinfully longing to be

independent of your earthly fathers and your earthly homes ; perhaps you do not love your heavenly Father and your heavenly home. Perhaps you cherish the hope that you may find pleasures and happiness in the far country. Be warned ; “ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” If they have enticed you and you have consented, turn back again ; poor, ragged, helpless, heart-broken, though you may be, the Father's house is still your home, the Father's heart still yearns for you, and though you may have grieved Him sorely, though you may have brought down the grey hairs of those who have loved you here in sorrow to the grave, He is tender and compassionate ; and if you come to Him in the true spirit of the prodigal, He will pardon you freely, receive you affectionately, and rejoice with all in the heavenly household over the son who “ was dead and is alive again, who was lost and is found.”





The Fisherman's Son.

T was a beautiful morning in June, when a merry party of boys and girls were strolling on the beach at Hastings. I say strolling, but that is a wrong word—boys and girls never stroll on the beach. They are always digging trenches, writing their names in the sand, climbing the cliffs, or dodging the waves which break in upon the shore and threaten to wet shoes and stockings through and through. This merry party I am speaking about had been for several hours amusing themselves in the thousand-and-one ways in which children know how to find fun on the sea shore, and were wending their way to a shady nook under a fine cliff, when they saw coming slowly along a fisherman with a basket under his arm and a pipe in his mouth, who looked very much as if he had had a hard morning's work and was returning to his home.

Ned Barry, a lad about thirteen, who was always fond of a change of any sort, and was ever on the look-out for amusement, said to George Wilmot, a laughing-eyed boy about his own age, "I say, George, wouldn't it be jolly if we could get that fisherman to spin us a yarn, as the old boatman did the other day when we went for a sail. Shall we try?"

"Oh, yes ; try by all means ; but I don't know how you are to do it. You can't stop the man in his journey, and he has other 'fish to fry' besides talking to us. Let us invent something to get him into conversation."

Ned's eyes sparkled with glee, for he had that moment hit upon a happy idea.

"George, I can see at this distance he has got fish in his basket ; but when he comes up I will ask him if he has got any periwinkles, and then we shall be able to get him to talk."

"Bravo, Ned ; you're a first-rate fellow," said George ; and the rest of the party fully acquiesced in the compliment.

Before the man came up to them, they reached the shady nook, and Alice Barry, being the eldest girl of the party, had commenced spreading a cloth over a large stone, which was to serve as a table for the luncheon they had brought in their baskets, while the rest of the party seated themselves round in a very picturesque group.

When the fisherman came up, Ned was all ready with his question.

"Can you sell us some periwinkles for our luncheon, fisherman ?"

"No, master, I can't," replied the man. "I have got some fish here, but that is all I have got ; and sorry I am to have 'em ; for I have been all round the town this morning, and then to St. Leonard's, and only a sixpence have I turned."

The man was an openhearted-looking fellow, with a broad pleasant smile on his face, but as he spoke a melancholy expression followed the smile and he sighed.

"You don't happen to know whether your mamma wants any fish, do you?" he said to Ned. "I must turn some money to-day, somehow, for my poor lad Jack is terrible bad."

"I dare say she does," answered Ned; "but what is the matter with Jack?—do tell us about him."

"Why, sir, it ain't much to tell in itself, but Jack is my boy as I said before, and he won't be mine much longer. He's going, as he told us last night, to where there's 'no more sea,' as the Book says. You see, sir, Jack had always been brought up by the sea, and when he got to be about twelve year old, he wanted to go away and see foreign parts, and I let him go. He only had two year of it, and a fortnight ago, come to-morrow, he came back again. But he had so altered, he was nothing but skin and bone. Fever first brought him down, and then hard fare and a rough life broke him up."

"But he has had a doctor, I hope, and everything to set him right again?" said Ned.

"Well, sir, we have done what we could, but you see poor folk can't have what they would; and as for doctors, they ain't of any manner of use now. The doctor said it was all over with him, and all we could do was to give him good food."

Ned was a very sensitive boy, and the tear which he saw sparkling in the fisherman's eye went to his heart. Any story of a young sailor was sure to engage his sympathy, for he once had a brother, a few years older than himself, who went away to sea; and only a year ago the sad news had come

home that in a strange country, a stranger amidst strangers, that brother had died of a fever which was raging there. He recollected the grief there was at home, and how his mother had wept sorely and would not be comforted, for she had never been able to ascertain any particulars about the circumstances of his death. Turning to the rest of the party, he said, "You stay here till I come back, and I will run home to mamma and ask her to take some fish, and see if she can't help this man."

Then speaking to the fisherman, he said, "If you will come with me, I think I can get you a customer."

The tear, which had only sparkled in the fisherman's eye before, now rolled down his sunburnt cheek. "God bless you, my young master," he said, as they walked along together. "It'll do Jack's heart good to know that somebody felt for him, even if I do not sell the fish."

When Ned got to the house where his mamma was staying—for Mrs. Barry did not live in Hastings, but was only visiting there for a little time—he did not lose a moment in telling her the incident of the morning, the arrival of the fisherman with him, and the object for which they had come.

Mrs. Barry was delighted to find that Ned showed so much anxiety to be useful, and commended him for what he had done. "I am glad you recollect what we were talking about the other day," she said; "we both agreed that everybody could find useful work to do everywhere; and you see that even upon the beach, in holiday-time, you have found this to be the case."

Mrs. Barry went down to see the fisherman herself, and gave him a good order for his fish.

"I am sorry to hear your son is so ill," she said; "I shall be out this afternoon, and if you will tell me where you live, I will call upon you, and see if I cannot be of some little service to you at this sad time."

"Oh, thank you, mamma," said Ned, as soon as the fisherman had gone. "I was sure you would do all you could to help the man, and I feel sure, too, that his son deserves it. I think he must be a good boy, for he reads his Bible—his father told me as much. Will you let me go with you? I should so like to see him!"

Mrs. Barry consented, and Ned ran off again as fast as his legs would carry him to join his friends on the beach. "It's all right," he cried, as soon as he came up to them. "The fish are sold; and what is more, mamma has promised to go and see Jack."

"Well, after you had gone," said George Wilmot, "we began talking about sailors and sailor-boys, and all their dangers and privations; and we talked a good deal about Jack. And then we thought what a funny thing it was that we should hear about him as we did, and Alice said that as we couldn't buy the periwinkles, we had better put together what money we had in our pockets and send it to him; and so we got together eighteen-pence, and now you may give it to your mother to take to him."

That afternoon, Mrs. Barry and her son started off in quest of the cottage of the fisherman. They found it without much

difficulty—it was a little one-storied hut, nestling under the shadow of a cliff.

Jack was lying on a bed beside an open window, for the day was close and sultry. Beside him sat his father, and on a table near him lay an open pocket-Bible.

“Well, Jack,” said Mrs. Barry, kindly taking him by the hand, as she seated herself beside the bed, “this is a sad time for you, my young friend. It is a very hard thing to bear pain and sickness, but I hope you are able to think it is all in God’s providence that these things happen.”

“Oh yes, ma’am!” said Jack, and his face lighted up with an intelligent smile. “God does not willingly afflict; and His word says, *light* afflictions work out *weights* of glory, only the afflictions are but for a moment, and the glory eternal.”

Mrs. Barry and Ned were both amazed to hear such an answer from a poor fisherman’s son.

“O Jack,” she said, “how thankful you should be that you have been early taught God’s word.”

“Ay, ma’am, that I am,” he answered. “My going to sea has cost me my life—for the doctors say, and I feel it to be true, that I shall not get over this illness—but it has been God’s means of giving me a life that will never die.”

“Will it fatigue you to tell me how that happened?” asked Mrs. Barry.

“Not at all, ma’am. When I caught the fever, I was sent away to the hospital, and while I was there I met with a young gentleman, the best that ever lived, I think, in this world. He told me of heaven, he read to me out of God’s word, and

when he got so bad that he could not read any longer, I used to read to him, and he would teach me what it was all about. But one day he was taken terribly ill, and it was known he could not live. 'Jack,' he said to me, 'this book was given to me by my mother, and it has been the greatest of all blessings to me ; it has led me to the Saviour. Take it, as my dying gift to you ;' and hardly had he said the words, ma'am, before he died. 'There is the book,' said Jack, pointing to the table, a restful smile playing upon his face as he spoke.

Mrs. Barry, who was much interested in Jack's touching story, turned round to the table and took up the book. A cry of surprise and joy burst from her lips, as she caught sight of the fly-leaf of the Bible which bore the inscription, "Ernest Barry—a parting gift from his mother."

A load fell from her heart, and a burst of praise went up to Heaven, as she realized the joyful news that not only had her prayers been answered in the salvation of her son, but that God had made him a blessing to others.

* * * * *

Not many days after, poor Jack died—not poor though, for he exchanged a world of dangers and sorrows for one of perfect joy and peace. His last days and hours were cheered by the presence of Mrs. Barry and Ned, who did everything they could to make him as comfortable as possible, and to alleviate the sorrow of his father.

The Bible he bequeathed to Mrs. Barry, a precious treasure to her, never to be gazed upon without songs of thanksgiving

ascending to that heavenly Father who had sought and found her son in "a far country."

In the churchyard where Jack was buried a neat little tombstone was raised at her expense, and never does Mrs. Barry, or Ned, or his young friends, go down to Hastings without spending many an hour in that quiet spot, talking about the day full of strange incidents when they met the fisherman on the beach.





Our Panorama.

A NEW YEAR'S TALE.

MR. MORTON was never so happy as when he was plotting some little scheme to give a treat to his children. It was his delight to take them down into the City to see the Lord Mayor's Show ; or to bring home a few fireworks to let off in the back-garden on the fifth of November ; or to help them build a grotto-castle when oysters came in season. No wonder that his children loved him, and thought there was not such another papa in all the wide world. Not only did he like to take a part in their merry games of play, but he would help them with their lessons, and try to explain all the difficult parts to them. Then, when lessons were all prepared for next day's school, he would say, " Now, children, hide the lessons for to-night, and we will have a little chat together ;" or, " I have brought home a nice little book, and we will read a chapter or two by way of recreation."

Mr. Morton had three sons and two daughters ; so that when they all sat together in their snug parlour of an evening, they made a very nice family party. Edward and

Arthur, the two older boys, were home for the Christmas holidays, and were soon to be sent to a boarding school; Mary, the elder of the two girls, was also enjoying a holiday; but little Robert and Emma, being too young to go to school, did not know what holidays were.

They had all spent a merry Christmas—no end of games of all sorts; their play-room had been gaily decorated with holly and misletoe, and they had pinned up laurel leaves on the wall, forming them into letters, which bade “Welcome,” at one end of the room, and “A merry Christmas to you,” at the other. Some of their school-fellows had been spending some few days with them on a visit, and they had, as you may suppose, a merry Christmas in good earnest.

Mr. Morton had promised them that on New Year’s Eve they should have one more treat. “But we have had so much merry-making,” he said, “that we will not ask any visitors, but have a cosy evening to ourselves. And this is how I propose we shall spend the evening. I will get home from the City as early as I can, and we will then have a round game together; quartetts, or forfeits, or something; then we will have an entertainment which I shall call ‘Our Panorama;’ and after that, your mamma and I will present each of you with our New Year’s gift. How do you like the plan?”

“Oh! capital, papa! capital!” they all cried, clapping their hands; and little Robert clapped his hands too, and said, “Tapital!”

"But what is the entertainment, papa?" asked Edward; "are you going to bring home a magic lantern, or have you a lot of moving pictures like a real panorama?"

Mr. Morton shook his head mysteriously, and said, "I shall not tell you anything more about it. It's a secret."

You may be sure that all the children were anxious enough for New Year's Eve to arrive. Twenty times a day, at least, they were talking together, wondering what their presents would be, and what the panorama would be like.

At last the evening arrived. A good blazing fire was made in the parlour; quartetts and puzzles, and counters and tee-totums, were placed on the table. At six o'clock Mr. Morton came home, and after taking a hasty cup of tea, joined the happy party. Loud were the merry laughs as the quartetts were made up after a great deal of changings and sortings, and high praises of "Bravo! Polly, bravo!" when Mary was declared the winner of the game. Robert built the Tower of Babel with his toy bricks, and danced round it with great joy, till in his excitement he shook the table, and down came the Tower to the ground. Emma managed to get fifty counters out of the pool by spinning the tee-totum, and then, when that game was finished, got out her dolls, and by bending their knees, so that their frocks came down even with the table, managed to make them stand about and look at the company. So passed the time, until the clock on the mantel-piece struck eight. Robert and Emma were too tired to keep

their eye-lids open any longer, and so they had a slice of cake, and went to bed.

"Now, then," said Mr. Morton, "let us push back the table, draw our chairs round the fire, and begin the entertainment of 'Our Panorama.'"

"But how can you exhibit it, papa, if we sit round the fire? Will it not be seen upon the wall?" asked Mary.

"No, it need not be," answered Mr. Morton; "you may shut your eyes if you like when the entertainment begins, and you will see it just as well!"

"How can that be?" Arthur was beginning to ask, and then a thought struck him. "I know what the panorama is," he cried. "Papa is going to tell us a New Year's story about a panorama."

You are getting hotter, as they say at Hide and Seek," answered Mr. Morton, "but not quite right. Come, draw round your chairs, and we will begin."

It was no sooner said than done. The two arm-chairs were placed, one on either side of the fire, for Mr. and Mrs. Morton, and the others formed the semicircle.

"Now, children," Mr. Morton began, "put on your considering caps, and listen to me. You know what a panorama is, do you not?"

"Oh yes, papa; we saw one of the Crimean War, you know; and it was a lot of beautiful pictures, which moved along one after the other, and a gentleman explained to us what they were all about."

"Quite right ! well, you saw that panorama with your bodily eyes, did you not? My panorama can only be seen with the mind's eye. Now, fancy you can see pictures passing before you, and that I am the lecturer explaining them.

"There is a little thatched cottage in Suffolk. It is New Year's Day. A mother and father are standing at the door beside some luggage. A boy comes out of the house, dressed for a journey. See those clouds of dust along the road ; the coach is coming up ; the shrill horn is blown by the driver. The boy jumps up on the roof as the coach pulls up. Handkerchiefs are waved, and away goes the coach.

"We have now a street in London. There stands the same boy beside an office-door. He has a leather in his hand with which he is rubbing a brass-plate, and a broom stands by his side, and he is about to take it in his hand to sweep out the passage of the door-way.

"Now, we see a little garret. There is only one tiny window ; the walls are bare, and only a bed and a chair, and a table made of the two boxes we saw outside the thatched house in Suffolk, are in the room. The boy is kneeling beside the bed, and before him is a Bible, the farewell present of his father and mother.

"The scene changes again. A gentleman is walking down a street. The time is winter, but the day is warm. He un-

buttons his great coat, and in doing so drops a pocket-book. A lad comes up, sees the book on the ground, and picking it up, hurries forward to restore it to the owner.

"Now we see another office. The gentleman who lost the pocket-book is sitting at a table, and at a desk near him sits the lad who restored it. He is dressed like a young gentleman, and we hardly know him as the boy on the coach.

"The last picture is a private house, nicely furnished, and very comfortable. A middle-aged man is sitting beside the fire, opposite to him is his wife, and two or three of his children are by his side. The time is——"

"New Year's Eve, New Year's Eve!" broke in Arthur and Edward and Emma. "Oh, papa, I'm sure you are the little boy from Suffolk, and the gentleman in the private house, too—is it not so?"

"Yes, you are right," answered Mr. Morton; "you have well guessed. I have told but a short story; you can fill in the outline. I have told it to you because you are soon going away from home, and I want you to recollect what the story teaches. You see what your home is, children; what do you think was the cause of my prosperity?"

"Good parents," answered Mary.

"The purse," said Arthur.

"The Bible," said Edward.

"All right and all wrong," answered Mr. Morton. "I had good parents, it is true, and they taught me to pray and to love

God's book. But how many people there are who have got on very badly and yet have had good parents! That poor man your mamma went to see on his death-bed, and who said, 'I have fooled my life away,' also said, 'My parents were good, religious people, and tried to teach me to be like them.' I found the purse, and that was indeed one of the causes of my prosperity, but it was not *the* cause. And I had my Bible; but how many thousands of people have Bibles who are not only poor as regards this world, but have no riches treasured in heaven!"

"I know what must have been the cause of your prosperity, papa. God was with you."

"Yes, my children; thankful as I am for having had good parents, and the Bible, and a kind friend—the owner of the purse, who helped me on in the world—I am far more thankful to my Father in heaven, who said to me, 'those that seek me early shall find me;' and having led me to Himself, became the guide of my youth."

"Will you tell us how that happened, papa?"

"It was on New Year's Day that I spent my first night in that garret away from home. I was thinking over all the good advice my parents had given me the night before. I felt very lonely. I wanted some one to love, and to love me, and I prayed that night as I never did before. God heard me, and answered me through His word. I read that beautiful verse, 'Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of

my righteousness.' It seemed as if I heard the voice of God. Although I was young, I felt I had been very sinful. I felt that He pardoned me, and through His grace and His providence I have continued to this day."


Mrs. Moreton rose from her seat and left the room. In a minute or two she returned with three little parcels in her hand.

"Now, my children," said Mr. Morton, "here are your New Year's Gifts. A Bible for each of you. It was my dear parents' New Year's Gift to me, and you know now what a precious one it was. May these be so to you ; but recollect that though you have good parents who love you, and wish to make you happy and prosperous here and hereafter, though you have a Bible which will teach you many great and glorious truths, it is only as you seek and find GOD HIMSELF, through Jesus Christ His Son, that you can have true happiness and true riches. May you love and serve Him in the days of youth, and He will guide you by His counsel and afterward receive you to glory."





He was a Boy once.

NE night in December, I had been out with my father, to spend the evening with some relations who lived in the suburbs of London, and it was getting on towards the hour of midnight when we were threading our way through the almost deserted streets on our way home. I was only a lad about thirteen years old, and it was quite an event in my life to be out at that late hour. As we were walking along, we saw a man on the other side of the road, reeling about and shouting snatches of a song. It was very evident he was sadly intoxicated. The kerb-stone was raised some distance from the road, and I said to my father, "If that unfortunate man happens to reel over a little farther, he will go headlong into the road and hurt himself." I had hardly said it when he tumbled up against a post at the edge of the kerb, and losing his balance he fell forward into the road. At that instant an omnibus was coming along at a violent pace; my father and I shouted at the top of our voices, "Stop! stop!!" but it was too late. A heartrending shriek came from the poor man, the wheels passed over his

head, and by the time we could reach the spot, he had faintly uttered his last groan and was dead.

My father was the first on the spot to reach the unfortunate man ; he wiped his streaming face, and raised the shattered head, but all was over ; and as the people from the bus got down and stood around, there was only one thing said, " He's gone, poor fellow, he's gone ! " I stood, faint and trembling, against the post where I had seen the man stand but a few minutes before, and the hot tears streamed down my face while I waited for my father to join me. I had never seen death before, and to see it in that terrible way was almost more than I could bear. After awhile the body of the poor man was put on a stretcher, and when my father had given his name and address to the policeman, he came to me. He took my hand, and I felt that his was cold and trembling like my own, and we walked slowly away. I could not restrain my tears, and it was well, perhaps, that I could not, for it relieved the terrible excitement under which I laboured. We hardly spoke a word until we got home. My mother and all the household had gone to bed, so we sat down in the parlour and my father was the first to speak.

" He was a boy once, George," he said, as if following out a train of thought ; " that head once rested on a mother's lap, and that voice, which so recently shouted the drunkard's song, perhaps used to breathe the words of youthful prayer."

" Oh father," I said, " is he *really* dead ? is there no hope for him ?"

" No, my boy, he has had at least thirty years of tender

mercy shown him by a loving God, and now he is gone where mercy can never reach him. Perhaps when he was young, he was brought up well, and at your age, George, he may have had many kind warnings of good parents and friends; he may have read his Bible and looked forward to manhood with great joy; and how awful must be the remorse and anguish of his spirit at this moment, as he finds hope and mercy gone for ever. Oh George, my dear boy, I would lay down my life this moment to save you from ever being what that poor man is."

And as my father kissed my forehead I felt his tears drop on to my head. I could only say, "Father, if you will pray for me and God will help me, I will never live like that, and never die like that," and then I bade my father good-night, and went up to bed. But not to sleep. No, I sat down beside my little iron bedstead; there was my book-shelf by the side, with lots of good books given to me by my parents and friends; and there was my Bible, which my mother had given me on my birthday, and I had promised to read it every night and morning. But I remembered I had not read it since Sunday, and this was Thursday night. I tried to read, but I could not; I turned over the pages, and at last I found a verse which my mother had underlined with an ink-mark for me. It was the well-known verse, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." I sat for a long time with my hand resting on the page, and I felt as if the voice of that dead man was saying

the words over and over again to me, "Remember now thy Creator in the DAYS OF THY YOUTH, *while the evil days come not.*" And the words of my father rang in my ears, "He was a boy once."

I closed the book, and I knelt down by my bedside, but I could not pray; I only thought about that man when he was a boy. I was thirteen years old. Did he think, and feel, and act as I did, when he was only thirteen years old? Was he always inclined to be and do evil? or was he gradually lured away by bad companions, and by neglect of prayer and God's word?

I tried to trace his history and the steps by which he came to a drunkard's death; and at every fresh instance I thought of, I cried, "O God, never let me be led away like that."

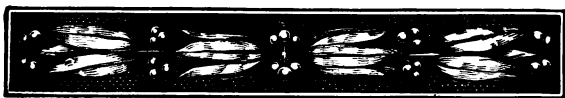
Then I thought of my own future life, and I felt that I must give expression to my thoughts in prayer, "O God, I have seen to-night how much my own father loved me, when he said, with tears, he would die for me rather than that I should turn out badly; and the Bible tells me that Thou lovest me more than my father. Oh make me to love Thee, and remember Thee now. Oh take my life at this moment, while I am on my knees, praying to Thee, rather than I should grow up careless, and hardened, and die as that man died; oh, give me a clean heart and a right spirit now, for Jesus Christ's sake, who would not turn children away, and who will not turn me away, now I am old enough to know right from wrong. O God, pardon me that I have lived to be thirteen years old without thinking like this, or praying like this before."

Two or three hours passed away like this, sometimes praying, sometimes only thinking, and when at last I rose from my knees and got into bed, I felt that God had heard me, and the poor man's death had been overruled in the mysterious providence of God to be the means of my new life.


Yes, my friends ; and though many years have come and gone since then, I can look back to that night as the time when God pardoned me, and made me His own child.

And now some of you are about thirteen years of age ; perhaps as you walk along the streets you see sad sights of sin and wickedness in men ; do you ever think what you will be when you are their age ? Do you ever think that in all probability what you are now you will be then ? Oh that I could by this little story make you feel as I felt that night when I first really prayed. You are boys now, you have not been led away into open, hardening sin, and Jesus is calling you, speaking to you perhaps through this very story. Remember Him ; seek Him early and you shall find Him ; and "while the evil days come not" make Him your friend, and then He will give you something worth living for through life, and at last receive you with joy into His bright mansions where there is fulness of joy for evermore.





The Every-day Book.

“ES, Bob, I like the Bible well enough, and should be very sorry to let a Sunday pass without reading it ; but it isn't an every-day sort of book. Religion is religion, and Sunday is the time for that, and the Bible the book to improve it ; but week-day life wants week-day books, and you can't mix religion up with everything.” So said Harry Northcote to his friend, Robert Benton, one day, as they were strolling through the fields, which were ripe for harvest. Robert was a year or two older than his companion, and was not only a staunch lover of that grand old book which is “The light and lamp to the path of life,” but had chosen the good part which that book is designed to reveal. Harry Northcote was far from being a thoughtless youth, and the counsels of good parents and lessons of earnest teachers had not been lost upon him, although they had not yet produced the same results which they had in Robert.

“I am afraid, Harry, that you have got hold of some wrong notions about the Bible,” answered Robert Benton ; “but come, sit down here beside this tree, and I will try to show you that the Bible is an every-day book, and that religion is a thing which ought to be introduced into every-day life.”

"Well, Bob, agreed ; but don't preach, that's a good fellow ; talk as much as you like, but leave preaching to the parsons. Well now, I am just going into a situation, you know, and my salary is to be five shillings a week. Now that's a very everyday sort of affair ; will the Bible tell me how to rise in my situation till I get fifteen shillings a week ?"

"Yes, Harry, it will. The Bible tells us to be not 'slothful in business,' and assures us that 'the hand of the diligent shall make rich.' It tells us how to behave ourselves to our employers, and how to avoid the thousand temptations which come in our way as soon as ever we go out into the world."

"Yes, that's true, Bob ; but it doesn't tell us how to get on in our particular business. Texts of scripture are in their proper place in the pulpit, but they ain't much use in a warehouse."

"It depends, Harry, whether we are seeking to make our business and our whole lives consistent with God's law ; if we are, and if the word of Christ is dwelling richly in us, then for everything around us that word has a lesson."

"Tell me how, Bob."

"Well, I hardly know how to tell you in detail. But suppose you hear a fellow-clerk swearing, God's word comes as a rebuke and a lesson, 'Swear not at all ;' if you hear improper conversation, another passage comes to mind, 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.' Or if you are sneered at, because you do not join with them in that which God's word and your conscience tells you to be wrong, a text comes to mind, 'All they that will live godly must suffer persecution.' But if we are wanting to serve God

and mammon too, then, Harry, these texts do not come to our minds when we want them ; and if they do, they seem to us out of place, because they rebuke us."

"I wish I knew as much about the Bible as you do, old fellow," said Harry, after a pause ; "I think I should get on much happier and better. Tell me a good plan how to make the Bible more of an every-day sort of book."

"I am a poor teacher, Bob ; but I'll tell you how I have tried to make the Bible of constant service to me. I always read some verses every morning, and determine to try and make them my watchwords for the day. Now, this morning I was reading the parable of the labourers in the vineyard ; and when we were called up to receive our week's salaries, the words of the lord of the vineyard came into my mind, and that brought up other thoughts about the great day of settlement, when we shall every man receive his reward. And I like to associate the Bible with everything around. Do you know, Henry, I believe that is the reason why much of the word of God is so homely that, even in the most ordinary objects around us, we may always see and hear things which shall remind us of precious truths, and impress them on our hearts. Come now, just to show you that the Bible is an every-day book, let us take this scene which is before us, and see if we cannot find many things around, to associate and impress Scripture lessons."

"Then let me describe the scene, Bob, and you give the interpretation. First of all, then, there is the blue heaven overhead, and the bright sun shining upon us."

After a moment's pause, Robert quoted reverently, "The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament showeth His handywork." "Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in His beams."

"Robert, you are just like a concordance," said Harry Northcote, surprised to find how readily his companion had the words of inspiration on his tongue. "I declare I should have looked up at the sky a thousand times without thinking of David's words. But go on. I can see yonder range of hills, with the cattle browsing on the slopes ; and down by the gorge the sheep are gambolling ; and there is the river winding round at the foot of the hill, and——"

"Stop a moment, Harry ; everything you have mentioned suggests some passages of Scripture. 'The strength of the hills is His also.' 'The cattle on a thousand hills are mine.' And in that wonderful description of Jesus in the 8th of Proverbs, it says, 'Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.' And the river reminds me of many passages. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.' 'Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' The sheep remind us of the Good Shepherd, who giveth His life for the sheep. But what else is there in the scene before us, Harry ?"

"There is the old church, and no end of gardens round about it. There are the birds skimming along by the old spire, and there are the reapers at work over in old Farmer Wurzell's cornfields. Now, Bob, if you can find interpretations for all these, I shall really begin to think the Bible is an every-day

sort of book ; for I pass all these thing every day in my life, and they ought to teach me more than they do."

"Let me see. The old church. Well, David's Psalms are full of descriptions about the place of God's worship. 'Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary;' and you remember his wish, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord; to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple.' Then the birds flying about the church steeple remind us of the words of Jesus, 'Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without His knowledge.' The gardens remind us of the garden of the Lord, in which are the 'trees of His own right hand planting;' and old Farmer Wurzell's corn-fields remind us of that great and stupendous event in which we shall both have to take a part, Harry. 'The field is the world; the harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels.'"

After a few minutes spent in silence, Harry Northcote looked in the face of his friend, and said, with animation—

"Oh, Bob, what a *real thing* religion must be to you, if you can see God in everything, and find even the scene around us like a mass of Bible lessons! I don't think I shall ever pass along this way again without remembering them, and I will try to find out how I can make the Bible a more useful book to me."

"That book, Harry, tells us to seek and we shall find; and if we love Him of whom all Scripture testifies, then He will open our understandings, and teach us, by His Spirit, how to find words of wisdom and instruction there, to guide and help

us in sorrow or in joy—in business or in pleasure. And now I must be trudging home. Will you let me give you one text as my wish for you? ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.’”

The youths parted—Harry to think over the conversation, and Bob to pray over it, that God would bless it to his friend. And not long after, Harry entered upon his situation ; and when he wrote to Bob, to tell him how he was going on, he said—

“I shall never again say the Bible is not an every-day book. Oh Bob, it is an exhaustless mine, and it has something in it to suit us at all times and in all places.

‘The watchword in life’s battle,
The chart on life’s dark sea ;
The beautiful, dear Bible,
That shall my teacher be.’ ”





Only a Dream.



LAD was out one bright summer's day, wandering through the fields. By-and-by, as he came to a shady nook under a spreading tree, beside which was a mossy bank sloping down to the stream, he selected a comfortable spot, and lying down, with his arm for a pillow, he soon fell asleep; for the day was very warm, and he was fatigued by his wanderings.

As he lay, he heard voices, strange voices, which he had never heard before. The faint breeze, as it rustled the leaves of the branches overhanging him, spoke first. "*He* maketh the winds his angels," said the voice of the breeze, and it spoke hurriedly as it passed, for it was on a special errand. It had to scatter the mists which were hanging over the fields; it had to refresh those weary men, as they toiled away at their work; and then, as it saw a ship rolling lazily on the sea, it filled its sails and carried it along on its voyage. Scarcely had the voice died away, before another was heard. It was the voice of the rivulet which ran along at his feet, and it said, "*He* sendeth the springs into the valleys." Away it flowed; now refreshing the roots of the trees which grew along the bank; now

carrying away on its bosom some scattered seeds to deposit, and then cherish them in some congenial soil; now giving drink to the cattle as they came down to cool themselves and quench their thirst in the stream. Away it flowed, ever busy, ever useful, until it joined the mighty river; and there, seeing a large ship sailing down with the stream, it helped to bear it away to the boundless ocean.

The voice died away, but another soon came in its stead. A little bird flew up in the air, and sang as it flew, "The winter is past; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come." And away on its mission it sped; now to perch on yonder tree, where the little sick girl sat breathing the balmy air; now to cheer that old man, as he hobbled along, leaning on his crutch, perhaps enjoying his last summer on earth; and then to join the gleaners in the field, and pick up some grain to carry home to the nest.

Voices joined voices. The mountains and the hills broke forth into singing, and all the trees of the fields clapped their hands. The earth cried forth to the heavens, "Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights;" and the heavens cried forth to the earth, "Praise the Lord from the earth; mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and beasts, and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl." And the swelling chorus, as it filled all earth and heaven, joined in one glorious anthem, "We praise Thee, O Lord."

The voices all died away, out still the youth slept;

and in his sleep he saw and heard yet stranger sights and sounds.

The trees, which had been waving their branches over his head, were torn by a ruthless wind, and the green fresh leaves withered and fell in showers around him. The murmuring stream ceased to flow; its waters were held fast in fetters of ice. The little birds had all hushed their voices, and only left their nests in the bare leafless trees to seek among the snow some scraps of food.

Then a figure issued forth, and walked across the land. It appeared to be a young man, but the face was averted, and the features could not be seen. Hurriedly it passed along, and muttered in a sad and mournful voice, "He giveth snow like wool; He scattereth the hoar frost like ashes; He casteth forth His ice like morsels; who can stand before His cold?" On walked the young man, baffling against the sleet, and vainly striving to obtain warmth. Presently he rested beside a gate, and gazed upon the barren land which had once been waving with rich golden grain. Sorrowfully he raised his hand to his brow, and the tears fell down his face as he cried aloud, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved!" And then the fields faded away, and the hills melted down into empty space, and the sun withdrew his beams, and the blackness of darkness reigned alone; but the voice remained, and it cried, "Not saved—not saved!" And the echo of a thousand voices joined the cry, "Not saved!" but the sleeping youth heard one

voice, louder and stronger than the rest—one voice, whose accents he could not mistake; and it cried on and on, with increasing and still increasing anguish, "Not saved!" That voice was his own.

With a start the youth awoke. Anxiously he looked around, and not till he saw the well-known stream, and heard the singing birds and the chime of the village clock, could he realise it was only a dream.

"O Lord, I am so thankful this was only a dream," he said, as he knelt beside a stump of a tree. "Oh Lord, never let me in reality have to say, 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved!'"



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